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Against fascism and racism

February 2006

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Fortress Europe

The ultimate price for a better life

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A boat load of migrants intercepted by Spanish Civil Guards off Ferteventura, 8 January 2004 Picture: REUTERS/Carlos Guevara

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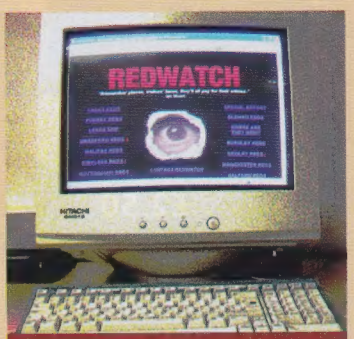

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The BNP's new trade union Solidarity is just the latest fascist attempt to hoodwink workers

Migrants suffer terrible hardships and risk death to escape the chaos of sub-Saharan Africa

Right-wing Gabber groups are responsible for many racist attacks in the Netherlands

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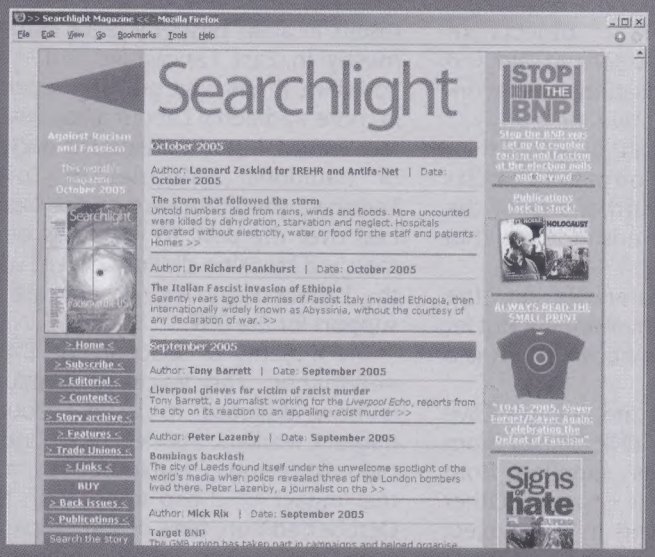

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Editorial...

FASCISTS HAVE A lot of enemies – anyone who is committed to democracy no matter where they stand on the political spectrum – so the British National Party has to fight on more than one front. In the past couple of months the BNP has announced that it is setting up its own trade union and at the same time infiltrating the Conservative Party in order to disrupt it.

The reason that the BNP wishes to undermine the unions is simple. Collectively the trade unions are the greatest threat to the BNP because they have the members, resources and reach into communities necessary to build solid local anti-fascist campaigns. As we demonstrate in this month's magazine fascism has been the enemy of trade unions not only in Nazi Germany, Italy, Spain and Chile but here in Britain, right from the start. From the General Strike of 1924 to the miners' strike of 1984, if the bosses needed some strikebreaking, the fascists were on hand. So much for their talk of standing up for British workers.

But it isn't only the labour movement that the BNP views as its enemy, it fears the right too. The BNP was horrified by the UK Independence Party when it made gains and saw it as encroaching on its territory. Britain's fascists know that it was not solely a strong anti-fascist campaign that saw the fortunes of the National Front diminish in the 1970s but also the rise of Margaret Thatcher as leader of the Conservative Party. The damage that was done to the NF when Thatcher made her infamous "swamping" speech in the run-up to the 1979 general election gave the fascists a slap that still stung well into the wilderness years of the 1980s. The BNP may have been sabre rattling when it talked of infiltrating the Tory party, but it nevertheless intended to send some disruptive ripples through the organisation because it sees the Tories as an enemy and a potential threat.

As many of our readers are the targets of nazi terror sites such as Redwatch, Combat 18, and Blood and Honour, which publishes personal details of its perceived enemies, we will not desist from campaigning to have these sites closed down. The excuses that run from government level down to the police service and Crown Prosecution Service are quite frankly pathetic. If these sites were perpetuating major fraud, or were used for paedophilia, they would quite rightly be shut down or blocked very quickly and the antagonists would be prosecuted, no matter what country was hosting the sites. This month we launch a new campaign to Shut Down the Peddlers of Hate as we are sick of the lack of action which we can only conclude is a lack of commitment to dealing with the problem.

As we go to press the trial of BNP leader Nick Griffin and Mark Collett is taking place. A full report will appear on our website (www.stopthebnp.com) and in next month's magazine. ◄

BNP union unmasked

Searchlight can exclusively reveal that the British National Party has launched a trade union. "Solidarity – The Union for British Workers" was registered with the trade unions Certification Office shortly before Christmas. Solidarity claims that it will be a normal trade union defending the interests of any British worker, but in reality it will be simply a front for the BNP. Given the BNP's views on trade unionism and industrial relations, Solidarity will be little more than a scab union writes Nick Lowles.

The creation of a trade union signals a dramatic departure for the fascist party. After years of encouraging members to infiltrate existing unions in the hope of seeking confrontation with officials, the BNP is now setting up an alternative structure.

According to documents lodged with the Certification Office, which regulates matters concerning trade unions, Solidarity aims to "improve the relations between employers and employees throughout all industries served by the union".

It will also strive: "to protect, assist and promote the working and living conditions of the citizens of the British Isles".

It all seems above board at first appearance but a closer look at the registration form makes its true agenda more apparent. Solidarity will also, its documents claim, "resist and oppose all forms of institutional union corruption" and "promote freedom within and without the Trades Union movement, protecting and promoting freedom of belief, thought and speech, irrespective of political and religious affiliation or creed".

It also intends to set up a Political Fund and "print, publish, issue and circulate" literature that "may seem conducive to the ... objects of Solidarity". It will also seek to "aid and join with any organisation, federation, political representative or body ... having for their object, or one of their objects, the promotion of the interests of workers or the furtherance of the political objectives enshrined within the Political Fund".

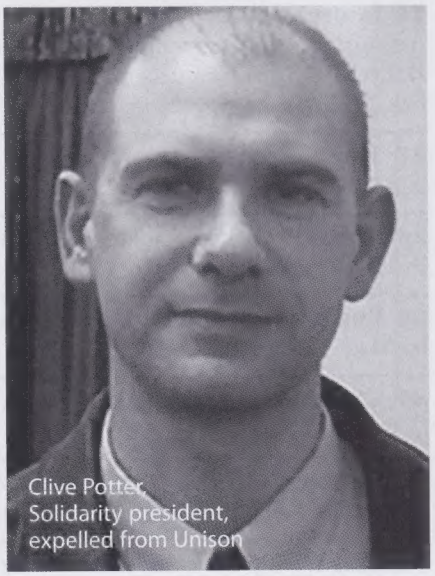
There is no reference in the documents to BNP involvement but let there be no mistake about it, this is a BNP front.

The "President" of the union is Clive Potter, a long-time BNP activist from Leicester, who was expelled from Unison for improper conduct. Other BNP activists involved in the project include Jay Lee, who was recently booted out of Aslef, and John Walker, the BNP's national treasurer, who has had his own troubles with the T&G.

The establishment of Solidarity appears to be a natural continuation of the party's turn to working-class politics which began in 2000 and quickened over the past two years. Although the BNP has achieved its best election results in areas beset by racial friction, mostly in East Lancashire and West Yorkshire, it has won growing support in more traditional Labour areas where race is much less of an issue. The decline of traditional industries in South Yorkshire, the Potteries and the North East over the past 20 years has been matched by rising disillusionment with the Labour Party and an increase in support for the BNP.

The majority of space in the BNP's newspaper, *The Voice of Freedom*, is now devoted to issues around migrant workers, the decline of British manufacturing, outsourcing and the impact of cheap imports. In the October edition, nine of the 16 pages were wholly or largely given to "industrial" issues. Most articles rile against the collapse of British economy as a result of a Government

Jay Lee, unwanted in Aslef



Clive Potter, Solidarity president, expelled from Unison

"Instead of defending native British workers against the wage slave migrants who arrive on our shores only to be exploited by greedy gangmasters and employers, the Union movement is embarrassing and betraying the rank and file membership by welcoming migrants with open arms. Thus the migrants are in direct competition with fully paid up members of the unions."

BNP: February 1995

whose internationalist agenda is selling out British workers and a trade union movement which is more concerned with political correctness, stifling free speech and appeasing minority groups. The BNP, it claims, is now the only party standing up for the British worker.

An early intervention into working-class communities was the campaign for a Miners' Memorial Day, launched by the BNP a year ago. Though initially a paper campaign, purely in response to the Holocaust Memorial Day, John Kitching, a Durham resident, took it further. The BNP has circulated a petition, badges and a leaflet in the former mining communities in the North East and Yorkshire. The campaign received backing from a number of trades councils and even the North East NUM before people realised it was a BNP front.

Anti-union

The BNP loves to hate the trade union movement. A few years ago it encouraged members to join unions in an attempt to seek confrontation with union officials (and publicity) in the hope of securing financial payouts when members were illegally expelled. But few BNP members carried out this work and the strategy became redundant when the law was changed to allow unions to expel fascists.

The BNP has always insisted that it is pro-union and objects only to those run by "the Marxist left", but its concept of trade unionism is markedly different from the usual meaning. The BNP does not really believe in independent unions, indeed it has said that in a BNP Britain there would be no need for them because employers and employees would be involved in the same organisations.

It should also be remembered where the BNP's real allegiance lies. During the 1984-85 miners' strike the BNP called for the Army to be used against the NUM. One Yorkshire BNP candidate even funded scab miners.

A time to complain

Solidarity operates in name but so far not in reality. For it to be a proper trade union it will have to obtain a certificate of independence. This is a long and complicated process and one that will cost the BNP several thousand pounds.

The certificate of independence attests that the union is completely separate from employers and employers' organisations and that it will operate solely in the interests of its members. Without a certificate it is highly unlikely that Solidarity could represent any of its members in an industrial tribunal, court proceedings or even in negotiations with employers.

In deciding whether a union is independent, the Certification Office will look at whether the union was formed with employer encouragement, the membership base of the union, its organisation and structure, and in particular how the rule book works in practice. The office would also look at its negotiating record and funding sources.

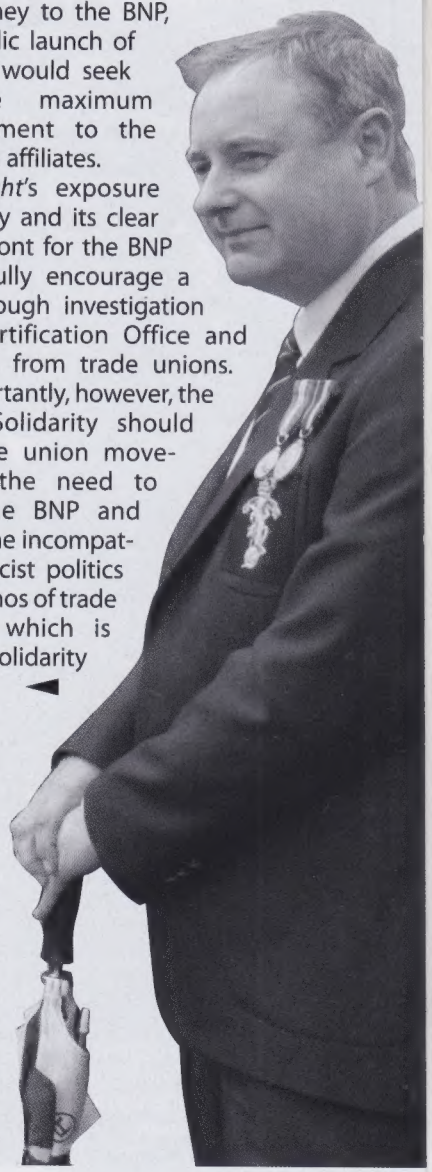
The certification process would involve a lengthy investigation and include a visit to the union's headquarters, and scrutiny of the executive committee's minutes and details of recognition by, and negotiations with, employers. Any member of the public has a right to express an objection.

As a trade union must have a record of activity before it can show that it is independent, Solidarity is unlikely to be able to proceed to this stage quickly, if at all.

The certification office can also deregister any union if it believes that the organisation is no longer functioning as a union.

Although obtaining a certificate of independence is clearly some way off, the BNP already has plans to use Solidarity as a political tool. Potter is currently looking into ways to establish a political fund, as a means to divert money to the BNP, and a public launch of the union would seek to cause maximum embarrassment to the TUC and its affiliates.

Searchlight's exposure of Solidarity and its clear role as a front for the BNP will hopefully encourage a more thorough investigation by the Certification Office and complaints from trade unions. More importantly, however, the birth of Solidarity should remind the union movement of the need to oppose the BNP and highlight the incompatibility of racist politics with the ethos of trade unionism, which is based on solidarity and unity. ◄

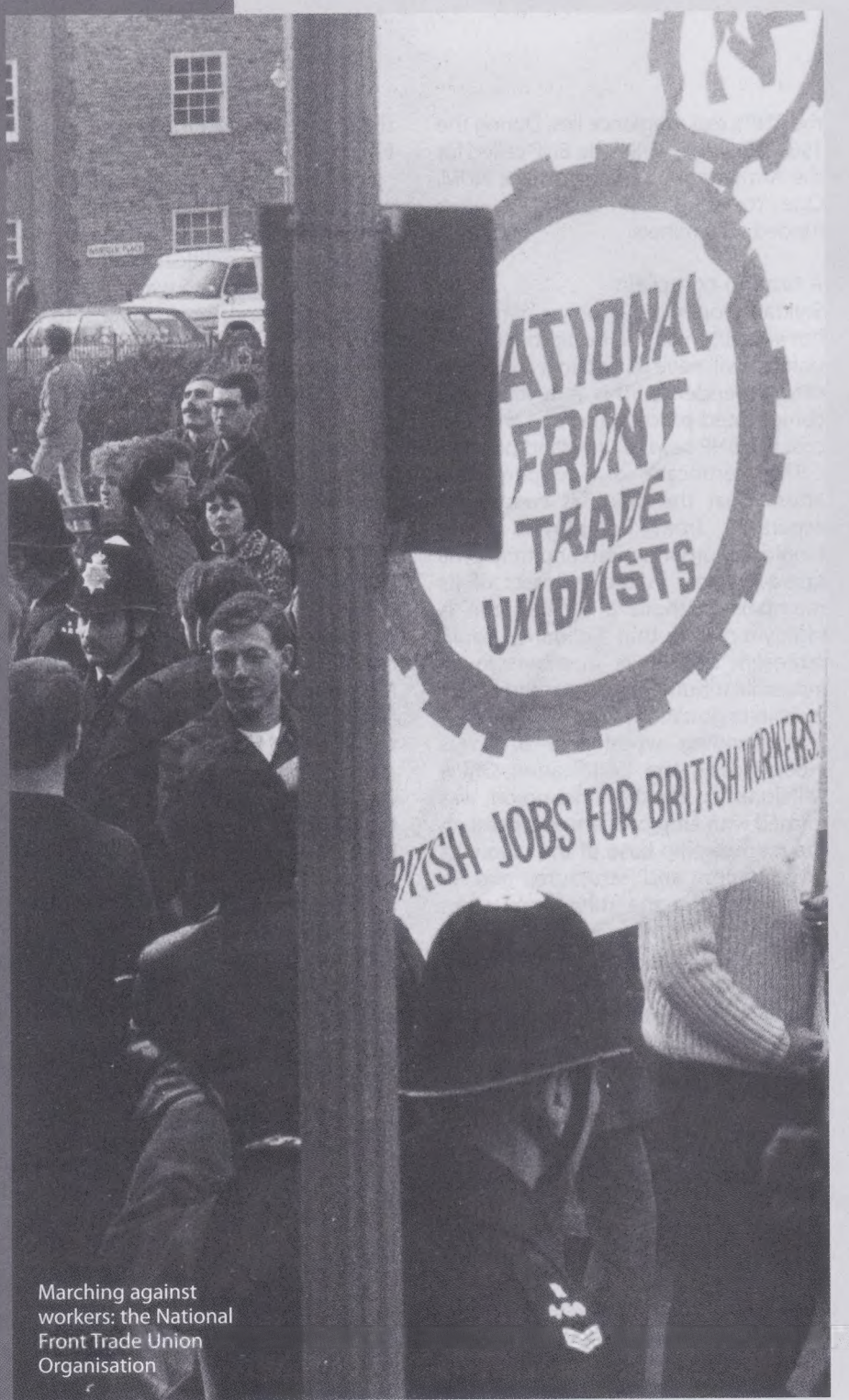


John Walker, BNP treasurer

Feature

British fascism and the trade unions

With the imminent launch of a BNP trade union, David Williams critically examines the real history of British fascism's fierce anti-unionism.



Marching against workers: the National Front Trade Union Organisation

The aftermath of the Russian revolution in 1917 was followed two years later by the British publication of the antisemitic forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This fabrication by the Tsarist secret police provided the radical right with the necessary "proof" that communism was part of an overarching "international Jewish conspiracy" aimed at Bolshevising Britain. In the aftermath of the First World War millions of radicalised ex-servicemen demanding jobs, not to mention "homes fit for heroes", were disgorged onto the streets leading to fears that Russian-style "soviets" were about to be formed. Industrial unrest rose, as did the popularity of the Labour Party, which in 1923 formed its first government to the horror of the radical right. Viewing this situation through the interpretative prism of *The Protocols*, the radical right became convinced that a Jewish-inspired revolution was just around the corner and began to organise accordingly.

The most prominent group to step into the breach was the British Fascisti (BF), an unfortunate abbreviation which in the parlance of the day stood for "Bloody Fools". The BF was formed in May 1923 by Rotha Lintorn-Orman, inspired by the example of Mussolini's seizure of power in Italy the previous year. A former ambulance driver in Serbia who was gradually descending into alcoholism, Lintorn-Orman feared the country was on the brink of revolution and advertised in right-wing journals for like-minded people to help her stop it. Lintorn-Orman may have understood little about fascism beyond its supposed commitment to "law and order" but her fear of an impending "Bolshevik" revolution was shared by a wide section of British society.

Historians frequently dismiss the BF as an essentially quirky irrelevance.

Its sustained anti-Labour activities merit more serious attention, however. Lintorn-Orman was also connected to the British Empire Union (BEU) and the Economic League, which helped employers weed out "troublemakers" from the labour force by compiling blacklists of workers, a practice in which it engaged for decades until its disbandment at the end of the century. Organised into paramilitary units BF members attacked left-wing newspaper sellers and famously kidnapped the Communist Party leader Harry Pollitt. BF members also infiltrated trade unions and established "cells" spying on Labour activists.

Fascist strikebreakers

During the 1926 General Strike the BF sought to form its members into specialist units to operate under the aegis of the Organisation for Maintenance of Supplies (OMS), which was tasked with maintaining essential services (and therefore violent strikebreaking). The BF was disbarred from joining the OMS as a corporate entity but members were informed that they could enlist as individual volunteers, which significant numbers of BF members did, giving the lie to the claim that the OMS was merely an apolitical "association of loyal citizens". Much has been made of the threat issued by the notoriously reactionary Home Secretary Sir William Joyson-Hicks to resign as vice-president of the National Citizens Union if fascists were permitted to join without amending their constitution. Much less has been made of his 1925 memorandum assuring Sir John Anderson that fascists could "be depended upon" to help staff the Supply and Transport Organisation, the government's emergency machinery for coping with nation-wide industrial unrest, a view that elicited no complaint when discussed by the Cabinet. It was not the fascist or "patriotic" views of the BF that concerned Joyson-Hicks but rather its independence. The BF Grand Council split over the offer. Those who accepted – the majority – split off to form the British Loyalists and subsequently were intimately involved in the radical right's "Clear Out the Reds" campaign, which was inaugurated the following year. Although this left the rump of Lintorn-Orman's group to pursue a more avowedly "fascist" direction, the defeat of the General Strike signalled to the radical right that the government was perfectly capable of dealing with the "red menace" without extra-parliamentary assistance unless it was mobilised under the banner of the state.

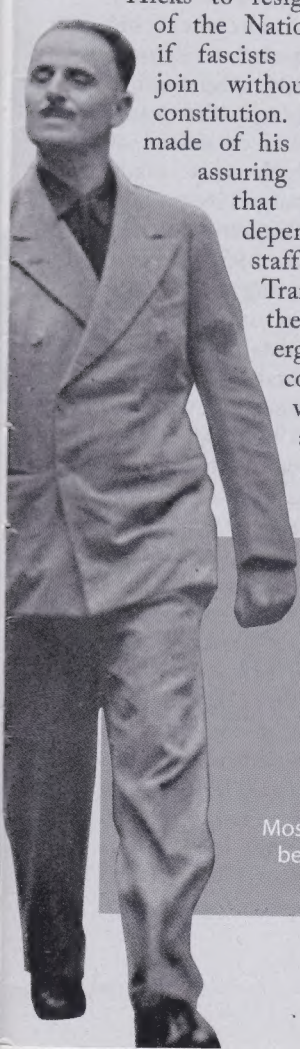
Like Mussolini's fascists much of the early membership of Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) consisted of disillusioned ex-socialists from across the left-wing spectrum, many of whom were drawn to the movement by Mosley's quasi-socialistic rhetoric and reputation as a man of "action". However, just as had happened in Italy, these early "left-wing" adherents to fascism were purged at the first opportunity. Instead Mosley rapidly lurched rightwards recruiting people from a "reactionary" ex-military, middle-class base, many of whom had been active in the BF. These included Mosley's chief lieutenant Neil Francis Hawkins, whose faction rapidly dominated the BUF, winning the support of *Daily Mail* proprietor Lord Rothermere as a result. All this was somewhat at odds with Mosley's claim that the BUF was a "classless" organisation.

A fascist union

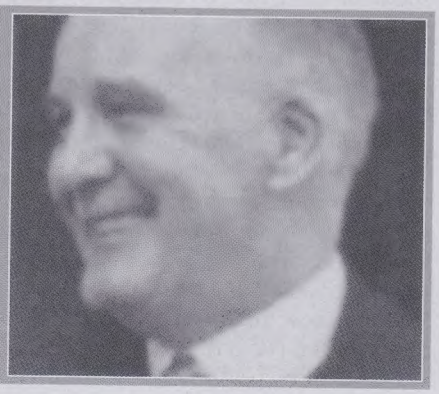
Mosley recognised, however, that the trade unions represented an implacable stumbling block to his ambitions to establish a fascist dictatorship. At the beginning of 1933 several fascist activists in Battersea, south London, founded a Fascist Union of British Workers (FUBW) as a local initiative. It was absorbed into the national organisation in April 1933. The FUBW wanted to imitate the relationship between the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress (TUC), in the process supplanting them both as the representatives of the working class. The FUBW, which soon developed branches in London, Manchester, Stoke and Newcastle, sought to organise disillusioned workers according to the diktats of the occupational franchise and the principles of the Corporate State. FUBW propaganda aimed to undermine the trade union leadership, shop stewards and activists. The FUBW targeted workers either by intervening in labour disputes – most notably those associated with the declining textile industry in Lancashire, the Firestone strike in Brentford and the "Tithe war" in East Anglia – where it sought to exploit disharmony. Typically the FUBW intervened at the factory gate itself, distributing leaflets and chalking factory walls with the aim of building up a regular audience for its speakers. From this pool new members could be recruited into industrial cells capable of organising within the factory and from this base inject BUF propaganda into the trade union movement itself.

An internal BUF memorandum revealed that the fascists were particularly reliant upon disillusioned trade unionists as this enabled them to appear more credible, not to mention the fact that, "he is usually the better man for making contacts and indulging in any discussion after the meeting". This was a tacit admission that the fascists themselves were not up to the task. Fascist propaganda aimed at undermining the trade union movement whilst its activists were encouraged to join it, seek election as shop stewards and peddle fascist propaganda from inside, particularly if by these activities they could chip away at the link between the unions and the Labour Party. The TUC conceded that in some areas this strategy had enabled the fascists to gain a "strong footing" within the local trade union movement, particularly in London and Birmingham where the fascists targeted transport workers in an attempt to drive a wedge between them and the Transport and General Workers' Union.

FUBW activists also targeted the unemployed, bribing them with cigarettes or a plate of soup after which they were inveighed upon to join the BUF. Its activists sought to build communal support by taking part in rent strikes and denying access to properties to bailiffs and the police. Activities such as these were effectively challenged by successful local initiatives such as the Stepney Tenants' Defence League, launched by residents and ►



BUF leader Sir Oswald Mosley feared the power of trade union anti-fascism



James McGuirk Hughes, Mosley's industrial organiser, betrayed labour activists to British intelligence

labour movement activists, which cut the ground from under the fascists.

Ultimately, however, the FUBW was a victim of its own limited success. Mosley was not keen on the idea of a separate fascist trade union not least because he feared that its working-class origins and more "revolutionary" antisemitic, anti-capitalist rhetoric posed a threat to his leadership and would terrify his wealthy backers. One disillusioned ex-fascist lamented that, "no body having the faintest semblance of working class character has a place in Mosley's scheme of things". Thus in June 1934 Mosley amalgamated the FUBW into the newly created Industrial Section of the BUF Propaganda Department and many of its leading officers were purged from the organisation. Henceforth BUF activity within the trade unions was to be overseen by an Industrial Organiser, "Major P. G. Taylor" a change that signalled very clearly how Mosley planned to deal with both the trade unions and "socialists" in general.

"Major P. G. Taylor" was a pseudonym for James McGuirk Hughes, a former military policeman who also ran the fascists' "Z" intelligence branch, which operated against Mosley's internal and external opponents. Hughes had a long history of anti-Labour activity. During the 1920s he headed the Liverpool branch of the British Empire Union (BEU) working on behalf of local shipping magnates (who secretly provided him with funds above and beyond those paid by the BEU) to disrupt the activities of labour activists by distributing anti-Labour propaganda, sabotaging trade unions, breaking into the offices of local Labour organisations and acting as an *agent provocateur* within left-wing groups, activities which ranged across the entire North of England. Hughes split from the BEU in 1925 after arguing with its General-Secretary Sir George Makgill, who was appalled at Hughes's failure to give a satisfactory account of his expenditure. Thereafter Hughes founded his own anti-Labour intelligence network, backed by local employers. It failed to take off and he was reduced to selling titbits of information on the Labour movement to right-wing newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* and the *Morning Post*. These were not his only outlets. Hughes was also in the pay of Special Branch and MI5, though the latter regarded him as something of a "windbag" inclined to inflate the importance of his activities.

According to the Friends of Oswald Mosley (FOM), Mosley knew of Hughes's intelligence connections, which meant that by appointing him to this key role Mosley was in effect placing his organisation at the disposal of British intelligence to use as a deniable front for its own covert activities against the left. Indeed the change of strategy that followed, from working-class organisation to permeation, would certainly fit the strategies pursued by the intelligence services to undermine labour activism. Hughes was one of only a handful of senior BUF officials not to be interned in May 1940. After 1945 he is rumoured to have reappeared in an unspecified South American country where he had a hand in helping reorganise its security services, which operated in the 1970s to such devastating effect against Latin American trade unionists. Hughes died in 1983. This then was the track record of the man personally chosen by Mosley to manage the industrial affairs of the nation under fascism.

At the outbreak of the Second World War Mosley and nearly one thousand of his followers were interned. Mosley was released in November 1943 but kept his head below the parapet until 1948 when he re-emerged as leader of the Union Movement (UM). It was an abject failure even in the East End where prewar BUF support had been at its strongest. As the UM began disintegrating in 1949 a group of UM activists sought to stem its haemorrhaging membership by invoking quasi-socialist rhetoric to capture working-class support. As the opening shot in this "left-wing" strategy UM ideologue Alexander Raven Thomson instructed UM speakers to begin emphasising the party's "revolutionary" credentials, reminding them to stress that Mosley was not only "anti-communist" but "equally anti-capitalist". The UM was acutely conscious of the fact that the trade union movement was the backbone of anti-fascist resistance in Britain and as such operated "to our grave disability". In order to "drive a wedge" between the working classes and the trade union movement the UM founded its own front group, the National Congress of Labour (NCL), to infiltrate the unions. The NCL aimed to recruit "an active and influential nucleus of several hundred key men capable of activity as a pressure group with the Trade Union" and who would expose "Communist" trade unionists and shop stewards in an attempt to get them sacked and blacklisted. The NCL was an utter failure. Exposed by trade unionists in Walthamstow and racked with internal divisions the NCL disbanded in 1952.

The peak of UM's attempts to "drive a wedge" between the working class and the trade union movement came in 1951 when members of Hants and Dorset Motor Services, which operated on the south coast, Poole and Southampton, had gone on strike against trade union zoning practices and were refusing to join the National Union of Railwaymen. The UM was able to gain a foothold in the strike because the UM Bournemouth branch leader was a bus driver at the depot. The UM threw its all into the strike. John Bean, the current editor of the British National Party magazine *Identity*, who was at the time a member of Mosley's UM, remarked in his autobiography that this was the only time he ever found UM propaganda saleable. Raven Thomson was delighted at the progress the UM was supposedly making with local transport workers, writing that "the strike was one of the most important developments since the war, and, in respect of Trade Unionism, the most important since the BU was founded nearly 20 years ago", not least because British fascism had found it "almost impossible" to make any inroads into the trade union movement. Raven Thomson had completely misjudged the situation, however. When the breakaway union was officially recognised in March 1952 support for the UM evaporated. Further efforts to push the UM in a "left-wing" direction failed to make any inroad as Mosley feared it would alienate his "respectable" middle-class followers who were invariably right-wing. He had not forgotten the early experience of Mussolini or indeed of the BUF itself, which only made progress once it had purged its roots of disillusioned ex-socialists and lurched rightwards. In the late 1950s fascists revealed the real meaning of its "left-wing" fascism when its members attacked trade unionists outside the British Motor Corporation, an event captured on film by a news crew.

It was not until 1967 that fascists renewed their assault on the trade union movement. Following Enoch Powell's "rivers of blood" speech in 1967 London dockers and meat porters from Smithfield market marched on the House of Commons under the banner "Enoch was Right". Following mass redundancies, morale in the industry was at a low ebb and unionisation poor. However, by the time of the Ugandan Asian crisis in 1972 the momentum had died out and neither group protested. For the newly formed National Front (NF) this spontaneous outburst against immigration signalled a vast reservoir of potential support.

Together with the Conservative pressure group, the Monday Club, remnants of Mosley's Union Movement and the Immigration Control Association, the NF helped form Trade Unionists Against Immigration (TRU-AIM), a body dedicated to trying to convert the trade union movement to racism. TRU-AIM failed in its goal not least because of trade union resistance and the NF's dissatisfaction at being unable to dominate the organisation. The NF abandoned TRU-AIM shortly afterwards to concentrate on building its own trade union organisation, a move that until then had been resisted as likely to bring down upon the NF the combined wrath of the trade union movement proper. John Tyndall, the NF chairman and later the founder of the BNP, recognised that the NF was not yet in a position to "embark on a campaign of repression of the left in the unions" and so settled for trying to win control of them by the normal democratic process, corroding their organisation and values from within.

National Front Trade Union section

The Mansfield Hosiery dispute in Leicester in 1973, in which black workers fought against racial discrimination and trade union collusion, was a defining moment. The NF had gained a foothold through one of its activists, Ken Sanders, who was a prominent member of the Hosiery Workers Union, and the dispute convinced the NF of the possibilities of exploiting racial tension on the shop floor, leading it finally in July 1974 to establish its own trade union section, the National Front Trade Union Organisation (NFTUO). Like the BUF in the 1930s the NFTUO sought to organise different occupational sections, forming sections for transport workers, post office workers and civil servants. The NFTUO succeeded in sinking its tentacles into some sections of the trade union movement in the Midlands, particularly at the Longbridge car plant and in the National Union of Railwaymen.

Lady Jane Birdwood, BNP candidate, who tried to destabilise the NUM and help scab miners

Several key disputes followed in the late 1970s, the Imperial Typewriters dispute in Leicester and the Ulster Workers' Council strike both in 1974 and the Grunwick dispute in 1977. The Imperial Typewriters dispute provided the NF with a further chance to exploit racial tension and attack Jewish-capitalism (Imperial Typewriters was American-owned) while the Ulster Workers' Council strike showed the NF that workers could be mobilised on nationalist lines. At Grunwick in 1977 Tyndall demanded that the police be given carte blanche to use teargas, rubber bullets and water cannon against a predominantly Asian workforce on strike against a mainly Asian management with the backing of the trade union movement. Grunwick was a magnet for a number of far-right groups including Self Help (see below) which tried to intervene directly in the dispute by offering to drive lorries for Grunwick's owner, George Ward. As well as trying to infiltrate the trade unions and exploit racial tensions on the shop floor Tyndall supported Edward Heath's Industrial Relations Act and its provisions aimed at de-unionising the workforce and making all agreements between employers and unions legally binding, in effect outlawing strikes. As support ebbed away from the NF after the disastrous 1979 general election it was forced to concede that its union-bashing activities of the 1970s had been counter-productive. During the 1980s it struggled to revitalise its trade union group under the direction of David Riley, a Blackburn-based fascist. Subsequent efforts failed following exposure by anti-fascists working with local trade unionists.

In the early 1970s the focus for anti-union activity on the radical right was not the NF but the Dowager Lady Jane Birdwood, a BNP candidate in Dewsbury and an obsessive antisemite who was convicted twice for distributing antisemitic literature including a vile leaflet depicting Jews drinking the blood of Christian children – the "blood libel" myth. An attempt to prosecute her for a third time in 1998 was abandoned after the judge ruled that she lacked the mental capacity to stand trial.

Against the miners

In the early 1970s Birdwood was the guiding force behind the Citizens' Mutual Protection Society, which sought, unsuccessfully, to beat striking postal workers by organising a private postal service. Birdwood also intervened at Grunwick in 1977 and the Trust House Forte union recognition case in Oxford, with minimal success. During the 1980s Birdwood was involved with a host of racist and anti-union organisations including the Immigration Control Association, Common Cause and Self-Help, a far right pressure group dedicated to smashing the trade unions formed with the assistance of Ross McWhirter of *Guinness Book of Records* fame and which served as a forerunner to the Freedom Association today.

Open efforts by fascist activists in the NF and BNP to exploit the miners' strike were roundly rebuffed by local communities. However, Self Help played a more covert role in trying to destroy the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) which has been kept secret until recently. Documents obtained by *Searchlight* reveal that Birdwood was advised by a leading barrister who counselled Self Help to hire private detectives to spy on the NUM in the hope of obtaining evidence they could use against the miners.

Self Help's plans to destabilise the NUM ran deeper, however. At the height of the miners' strike in July 1984 Birdwood sought to engineer a confrontation with the miners by purchasing a small mine, which could be used in order to take the NUM to court and sequester its funds. She eventually negotiated a share in a mine in Durham but her plans failed to come to fruition; others had already begun her plan to sequester NUM funds. Undeterred, Birdwood started several other legal actions. Selp Help stood resolutely behind the National Working Miners' Committee (NWMC) playing a part in its legal actions against the NUM, not to mention putting before them "certain proposals" which "we hope will lead to them taking the necessary legal action with our financial and political support", a reference to Self Help's plan to oust Arthur Scargill as NUM leader by having him charged with sedition. ◄

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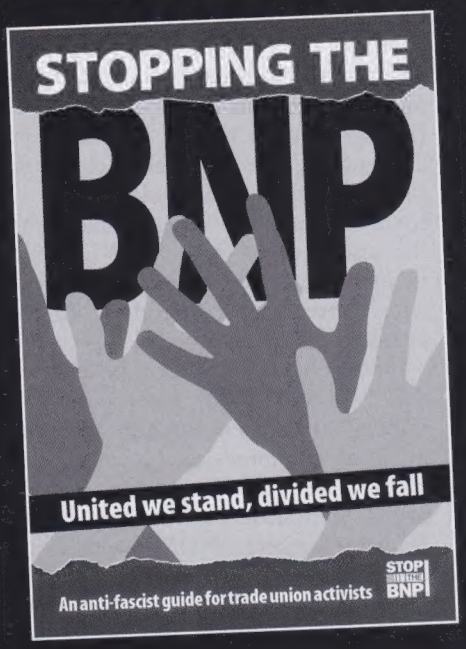

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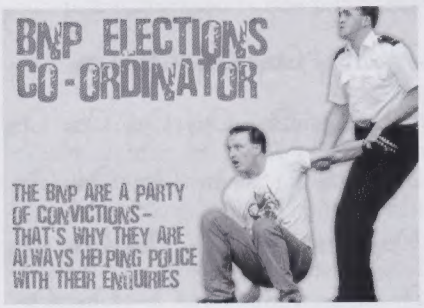

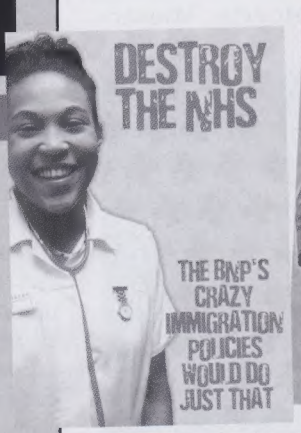

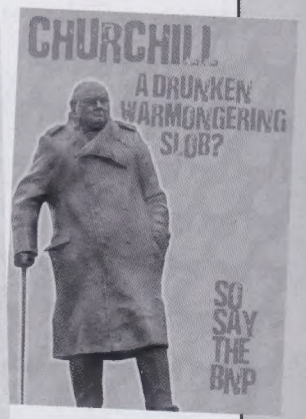

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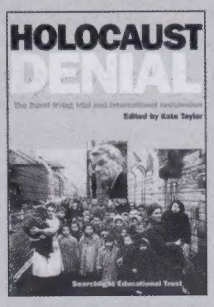

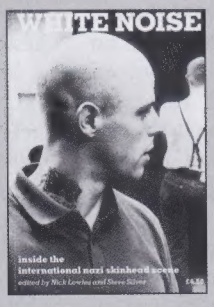

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Scandals engulf BNP leadership

By Nick Lowles

CHAOS HAS ERUPTED in the heart of the British National Party as leading members have walked out and another has been sacked. As the party faced the possibility of losing its leader and its propagandist, both on trial in Leeds on race hate charges, it is also having to deal with the departure of Tony Lecomber and its entire security team, led by Warren Bennett.

Tony Lecomber, the BNP's group development officer and head of internal discipline, was sacked for "making a serious error of judgement in speaking to a non-member about matters which could be misconstrued and which could thereby possibly have caused embarrassment to the party".

His dismissal came on Monday evening as the trial of Nick Griffin, the party leader, was just beginning. Initially the word spread that Lecomber had resigned because of stress but as the gossip mounted this explanation became untenable. Eventually a BNP organisers' bulletin was circulated which contained the statement about Lecomber's "serious error of judgement".

As *Searchlight* went to press rumours were circulating that Lecomber had been speaking either to the police or to a journalist and a big exposé of the BNP in the national press appeared imminent.

Lecomber's removal comes shortly after the loss of the BNP's security team. When Griffin's daughter finished with a young member of the team Griffin expelled him from the party. The security team went on strike and Griffin was forced to back down. Collett sided with Griffin's daughter and was behind much of the gossip that was being circulated around the movement.

The conflict reopened shortly before the trial began when Collett put round the rumour he could get Bennett "done". Bennett was naturally furious and demanded an apology. When the public school educated Collett refused and Griffin did not force him, Bennett walked out of the party followed by most of the security team.

This left Griffin with a potential security disaster as he prepared for the opening day of his trial. In the days before the case opened certain BNP members were hurriedly being offered money to act as his bodyguards. In an amusing twist of irony, most of the new security team was brought from London and the South to Leeds by Lecomber only hours before his own fall from grace.

The BNP is in disarray, with a number of other prominent members now mulling over their position. If Griffin is found guilty at Leeds Crown Court and imprisoned, the party could implode. A not guilty verdict would allow Griffin to regroup, but from a far weaker position than before.

Lecomber's job has been filled by the party's Yorkshire organiser, Nick Cass, who is also now providing security for Griffin. While Cass has shown a degree of competence in running Yorkshire, his new national role will clearly reduce his effectiveness in the region.

Lecomber will not be missed by many people within the BNP. His brusque manner and few social skills have made him widely despised. However, Griffin remained loyal to him despite repeated calls for his removal, largely because he has always been useful for carrying out the leader's dirty work and also because he is the one man in the party who could easily bring the boss down.

His sacking will also have a profound impact on the party's fortunes in outer east London especially in Loughton.

Collett is rapidly equalling Lecomber's status as the BNP's "most hated" and any prospect of him one day taking over as leader must surely be as remote as Lecomber's chances of winning a personality contest.

The resignation of the security team will also leave a major hole in the party, particularly with an election approaching. Bennett had built up an effective unit and there appears to be no obvious and immediate replacement.

There is another possibility, though unlikely, namely that Lecomber's sacking could be a short-term tactic to deflect any media investigation. He could be reinstated once the furore subsides or simply work behind the scenes. There are several precedents for this. Collett was supposedly disciplined for his "pro-Hitler" comments to a Channel 4 journalist only to speak alongside Griffin at a BNP meeting in Bradford a few days later. More recently, the BNP's Kirklees treasurer Andy Kershaw was expelled after he was arrested last autmun. Kershaw is very much back in the fold, acting as a temporary minder for Griffin at Leeds Crown Court. ◄

Out on his ear: former BNP group development officer Tony Lecomber
Picture: David Hoffman

MPs to intervene in Nazi books row

Amazon continues to sell Nazi books despite complaints from customers. Tesco and later WH Smith withdrew all their antisemitic titles after a campaign initiated by Searchlight and taken up by *The Jewish News*, but Amazon continues to ignore the offence these books cause.

A search of the Amazon.co.uk website on 18 January revealed *The March Up Country* by Harold A Covington, a notorious US nazi and racist, still on sale. The book advocates nazi terrorism and "leaderless resistance" and was a blueprint for David Copeland's London bombing campaign in 1999.

There are also seven books by Arnold Leese, the pre-war British nazi leader, including one on "Jewish ritual murder" – the nazi myth that Jews kill Christian babies. Amazon stocks books by the US nazi publisher Liberty Bell Publications and Steven Books, a front for Keith Thompson, the man who ran the elite hardline nazi group, the League of St George. And the turgid and libellous papers by the British antisemite and convicted criminal Alexander Baron are still interspersed among the books by or about the London anti-fascist novelist of the same name.

Searchlight's latest email to Amazon drew no response. If Amazon continues to ignore the growing criticism, the company is likely to face attack in Parliament from MPs who have pledged to take action.

BNP moles stalled at the starting gate

The British National Party appears to have lost confidence in its ability to win support by legitimate means. So frightened is it by the potential of David Cameron to revive the Conservatives' fortunes and appeal to potential BNP voters that it is trying to resort to underhand means to scupper the Tories' chances.

In a Christmas message to supporters, the BNP's leader, Nick Griffin, urged them to join local Tory associations "as ordinary new members won over by media publicity about the leadership election", and to work hard to establish solid credentials. They could then "spread rumours and dissension" in order to destroy the Tories and "clear the political space for something better".

It is unlikely that Conservative Central Office is greatly concerned at this ham-fisted attempt at infiltration, announced on the BNP website for all to see. In any case most BNP members quickly reveal their true colours as soon as they open their mouths. Perhaps realising the stupidity of this strategy, the BNP quickly removed the whole of the chairman's message from its website.

Fair-weather Christians

AMONG THE 150 or so supporters of Nick Griffin, the British National Party leader, outside Leeds Crown Court on the first day of his trial last month was a small number of people carrying placards showing the name "Christian Council of Britain". This was the first outing of this group formed by the BNP solely to have a go at the Muslim Council of Britain.

Interviewed by BNP TV, Reverend Robert West, who claimed to be a Tory, said he believed in freedom of speech and commended Griffin for exercising that right. He also called the Labour Party fascist.

The Reverend might not be so happy to support the BNP if he knew that its commitment to Christianity was mere expediency. Recently the BNP has claimed to uphold Christian values in the face of a perceived Muslim invasion of Britain. But less than a year ago, Lee Barnes, the party's self-styled "legal eagle", wrote: "The BNP is unique amongst conventional political parties as it has an ethno-specific membership and also explicitly represents the indigenous ethnic-religious communities of our British nation – from Identity Christians, Anglo-Saxon Identity Christianity, Celtic Druidism, Anglo-Saxon Odinism, Celtic Christianity to Wicca [witchcraft] and other pagan religions including those that see their Race as their religion and the BNP as the their [sic] Church."

Christian Identity, despite its name, bears no relation to Christianity but is the extreme antisemitic religion that grew after the Second World War among white supremacists and far-right terrorists in the USA and which believes Jews are descended from Satan.

The expediency on that occasion was Barnes's support for Robert Baggs, a BNP member who lost his appeal to an employment tribunal. He had claimed discrimination on the grounds of his membership of the BNP, which he saw as his religion.

Reverend Robert West, supposedly an independent voice

Shut down the peddlers of hate

Searchlight launches new campaign to close down the hate sites

By Nick Lowles and Gerry Gable

FOR TOO LONG British nazis have been free to peddle highly inflammatory, insulting and violent material on the web. While Redwatch gives personal details of anti-racist campaigners and trade unionists, the Blood and Honour site, which is linked to the nazi terror group Combat 18, encourages attacks and even gives instructions on how to make bombs and other devices.

Enough is enough.

Searchlight's repeated calls for the authorities to close down these sites have fallen on deaf ears. People have been physically attacked and threatened but the police and Home Office have so far refused to act, hiding behind the somewhat lame excuse that as these sites are registered in the United States they cannot be dealt with in a British court.

By refusing to act against the peddlers of hate, the authorities are becoming complicit.

Searchlight is working with a number of MPs to bring an Early Day Motion before the House of Commons demanding action. A comprehensive briefing paper will provide the Home Office and the Metropolitan Police with evidence of the British citizens behind the sites and highlight the illegal and offensive material that is being circulated.

We will mobilise MPs, trade unions and lawyers to put pressure on the Home Office and police.

Our campaign comes after the Blood and Honour website, controlled by Kevin Watmough, provided a link to a killing manual on a US website. Its section on poisons was similar to the material in the arsenal of Kamel Bourgass, who was jailed for 17 years last year for a plot to terrorise Britain with ricin and cyanide. In the same period that Blood and Honour posted the link, it also put up names of potential victims.

Last month discussion on the Blood and Honour website about the explosives in the London terror attacks of 7 July included advice on which chemicals to use to construct similar bombs and an exhortation to buy a book, available in the USA, full of information useful to a terrorist such as how to make a gun from a water pipe.

The authorities have been repeatedly informed but nobody has been charged and the website is still in business.

Watmough, from West Yorkshire, is at the centre of the nazis' web operations, though they are often fronted up by Simon Sheppard, who is based in Hull. Tony White and Tony Foy, two violent nazis from Leeds, have collected information and details on their political opponents. They have been ably abetted by a host of BNP members and even organisers who have supplied details of local anti-BNP activists.

Watmough was once the propagandist for Combat 18 and more recently the White Nationalist Party. Now he is involved with the openly nazi British People's Party run by the veteran nazi Eddy Morrison. Though small this group has been instrumental in stirring up serious violence in Northern Ireland and has recruited a core of hardline men and women to the extremist cause. Targeting young easily influenced youngsters is one of its main objectives.

The Blood and Honour site has served as an alternative to the Redwatch site when it has been offline for short periods in the past couple of years. For nazi "wannabe" terrorists it is a perfect companion to Redwatch, which targets anti-fascists, trade unionists, religious and political leaders for threats and violence. Redwatch displays its intended victims' home addresses, car numbers, photographs and often false accusations. Some are also falsely accused of being paedophiles on

Kevin Watmough, nazi webmaster

Redwatch's subsidiary site, Noncewatch, with the clear aim of making life even more dangerous for them.

Last November six members of the nazi Racial Volunteer Force were given prison sentences at the Old Bailey. Some of the charges against them were for stirring up race hate and promoting violence on the RVF website. Although Watmough was raided during the investigation of the RVF he was not charged. He had previously been raided in 1999 for his C18 activities but again was not charged.

Searchlight is sick and tired of the lame excuses offered by the authorities. It is inconceivable to think that a website, even hosted in the US, that detailed the private lives of senior politicians and police officers, linked to sites advertising bomb manuals and poisons, would not be closed down. Now is the time to act. We are not prepared to wait for more people to be intimidated and much less another David Copeland, the London nazi bomber.

Next month *Searchlight* will outline its campaign and tell readers how they can add pressure. ◄

AUSTRIA: Irving to face trial this month

Holocaust denier David Irving bides his time in an Austrian prison
Picture: Mike Emen

THE TRIAL OF the notorious British Holocaust denier David Irving has been scheduled for 20 February. Until then he will probably have to stay in prison.

Irving was arrested on 11 November on a warrant from 1989 for denying the Holocaust. The warrant stemmed from two speeches he gave in November of that year in which he stated that Hitler did not persecute Jewish people and that the 1938 *Kristallnacht* pogroms were not the work of the Nazis but of "unknown persons disguised as SA men". These two statements now form the centre of the case against him. The judges dismissed a plea by Irving for release on bail in early December on the grounds that he might flee Austria or commit further crimes of Holocaust denial.

His defence strategy is unclear but his current position seems to be denial of his former positions. In a statement, his lawyer told the judges that Irving now disowns his former beliefs after conducting research in Russia the mid-1990s where he discovered evidence proving that the Nazi gas chambers existed. He also claims that his 1989 statements have been quoted "out of context".

Irving's claim that he has "learned over the years" is dubious. When arrested, he was on his way to address the extreme right-wing student fraternity Olympia in Vienna, a group known for hosting prominent international fascists.

Meanwhile, Irving seems to be enjoying prison. Some of his guards allegedly asked him to sign copies of his books which have now been removed from the prison library. If convicted, Irving could spend another decade in prison. He might not like that so much.

His arrest has also triggered a discussion on the validity of Austria's law against Holocaust denial. While some on the liberal left urge its repeal – "Just let Irving talk" – anti-fascist organisations are strongly for the law. The Austrian Mauthausen Committee, a group of former Nazi concentration camp prisoners, has pointed out that it is "very sad that proponents of the liberal left are doing the work of the extreme right" by calling for the law to be scrapped.

From Rita Ruesch for Rosa Antifa Wien and Antifa-Net in Vienna

NORWAY: Arsonist joined nazi group

A 17-year-old boy went on trial in Bergen in January charged with arson, after torching the home of an Ethiopian family in the coastal city in 2004. The accused, who has not been named, admitted to the court that he joined the bizarre nazi sect Vigrid shortly after setting fire to the house.

In his testimony, the boy described a weird ceremony in which he was baptised in the name of Odin: "We stood in a ring of torches, with swords crossed on the ground. Tore read Viking poems and then I was baptised". Tore is Tore Tvedt, Vigrid's loony leader, who claims that the ancient Norse god Odin revealed himself to him and appointed him as his prophet in 1997.

The court also heard that the youth had been dumped by his girlfriend after she met a black youth and that he wanted to set fire to "the house of those he hated". The family, which luckily survived the blaze, was singled out for attack because the young arsonist was competing with the family's son to get a newspaper delivery round.

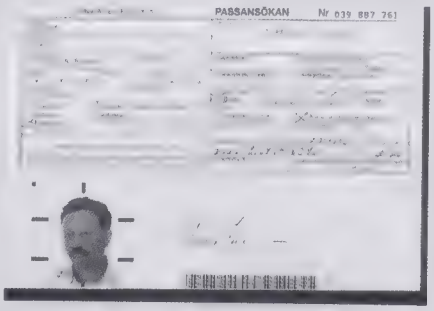
The young nazi delinquent told the court that he had informed Tvedt about what he had done and afterwards had close contact with Vigrid. Tvedt however claims, according to *Bergen Tidende*, that he has hardly met his young devotee and denies ever being told about the fire.

From *Monitor* in Bergen, for Antifa-Net

NORWAY: Antisemite adopts yet another name

The antisemitic publicist Israel Shamir has now legally adopted and registered yet another name for himself in Sweden, Adam Ermash.

This is not his first venture into the murky world of name juggling. The revelation by *Searchlight*'s sister magazines, *Expo* in Sweden and *Monitor* in Norway, two years ago that the self-styled Israeli Shamir was in fact a Swedish citizen of Russian origin called Jöran Jermas ruffled a few feathers at the time.



Jermas's Swedish passport registration before he changed his name

Jermas had also used other names in his nefarious activities and had been condemned both by Palestinian activists and by Jews for his antisemitic ravings on the internet and in various publications.

Born in Novosibirsk, Russia, under the name Israel Schmerler, Jermas emigrated to Israel with his parents in the 1960s, but soon moved to Europe, where he became a writer for various publications of the far right, as well as some on the far left.

After his identity was publicly exposed, Jermas and his pals reacted with fury and accused their critics of being agents of various organisations. What he did not tell his followers was that he had again changed his name to Ermash.

But Ermash, who presents himself as "a leading Russian-Israeli intellectual and journalist", continues to use Israel Shamir as his official name. Lately, under his Shamir identity, he wrote that he admired the stance of the Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for his remarks denying the Holocaust.

After exposing his new identity yet again, anti-fascist researchers in Scandinavia are eagerly placing bets on what his next name change will be.

From Tor Bach for *Monitor* and Antifa-Net in Oslo.

BELGIUM: Racists' Morocco visit fails to impress

FILIP DEWINTER AND Frank Vanhecke (pictured), the leaders of the far-right Vlaams Belang (VB), have visited Morocco to try to convince the "locals" of their party's anti-immigration case.

During the junket, Dewinter as usual did most of the talking and declared that he wanted to persuade Moroccans that Belgium was not a land of unlimited opportunities. "It's nothing to do with racism and xenophobia, not at all," he said. "Belgium, like the rest of Europe, is not a land of milk and honey for all the immigrants of the world."

"Today", he added in French with a strong Flemish accent, "we are launching a campaign of persuasion entitled 'we're welcoming but not crazy'." Dewinter went on to say that Europeans are not fond of Islam because of the terrorism carried out in its name by extremists.

The VB's visit generated a lot of media interest with even Al-Jazeera showing up at a press conference at the Rabat Hilton. They were not impressed. A Moroccan journalist commented that the VB had shown there was no equality in Belgium and that "they [the VB] start from the principle that the Flemish are superior to everyone".

Numbering around 450,000, the Moroccan community is the largest non-European ethnic minority in Belgium. Its highest concentrations are in the Brussels and Antwerp areas. Most Moroccan migrants arrived in the 1960s and the early 1970s until the Belgian government imposed a general halt to immigration in 1974.

Dewinter called on the Moroccan government to stop giving third and fourth generation Moroccans dual nationality. "One can only be faithful to one nation," declared the VB's oracle. The dynamic duo's pleas fell on deaf ears. Dewinter and Vanhecke had wanted to talk to Nouzha Chekrouni, the Moroccan minister with responsibility for Moroccan people abroad, and Hassan Amrani, the governor of Rabat, but both firmly rejected any contact with them.

"I will only speak to people with whom I could work together and who share the same values, like the rights of immigrants or international solidarity,"

Chekrouni told the press. The VB delegation also wanted an audience with King Mohammed VI but he too refused to grant its request.

Dewinter, who had to organise his own security and hired two bodyguards for the trip, inanely described the provocative journey, from which he and Vanhecke returned empty-handed, as "a big success".

From Wim Haelsterman for AFF-*Verzet/Résistances* in Brussels

SWEDEN: Nazis march again in Salem

SWEDISH NAZIS STAGED their sixth annual march in Salem, near Stockholm, on 10 December to commemorate the murder of Daniel Wretström who was knifed to death by young immigrants in 2000. Before he was killed Wretström, 17, had been in contact with right-wing extremist groups, a fact that instantly guaranteed him nazi martyr status.

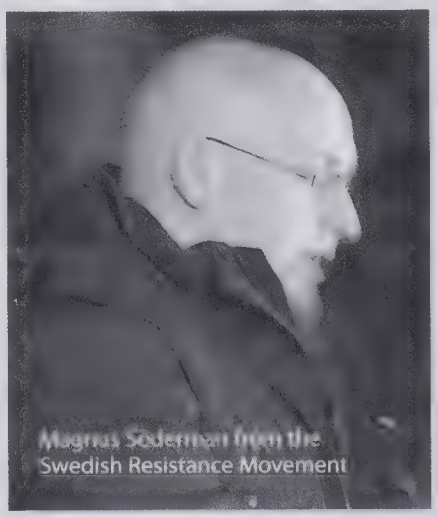
As in previous years, every important nazi outfit in Sweden was represented in Salem but only about 1,300 people marched, a hundred fewer than last year and a sharp fall from the 2,000 nazis who took to the streets in 2003. Groups present included the Svenska Motståndsrörelsen (Swedish Resistance Movement), Nationalsocialistisk Front (National Socialist Front), Blood & Honour, Info14, Nordiska Förbundet (Nordic Association) and the Nationaldemokraterna (National Democrats). There were also nazis from abroad, especially Germany.

The speeches were less radical than in 2003 and 2004 for two reasons. Firstly, the police were recording and filming all speeches this year to document the event and to check whether there was any incitement to racial hatred. A second and probably more significant motive for this year's restraint was to avoid a ban on a planned nazi demonstration in Stockholm on Sweden's national day, 6 June.

Speakers at the 10 December rally featured most of Sweden's top nazis including Dan Eriksson of Info14, Henrik Johansson from the Nordic Association, Anders Ärleskog for the National Socialist Front, National Democrat Robert Almgren, Magnus Söderman of the Swedish Resistance Movement and, from Germany, Lutz Giesen.

Although there was no violence in Salem, later that evening seven nazis were arrested in Stockholm for assault. Some of them were from Germany and Norway but their names have not been revealed.

From Richard Slätt for *Expo* and Antifa-Net in Stockholm



Magnus Söderman from the Swedish Resistance Movement

Nazi shrine for Daniel Wretstrom
Pictures: *Expo*

THE NETHERLANDS: Ministers accused over fire that killed migrants

SEVERAL SERIOUS complaints were filed against the Dutch state at the end of 2005. The first, from the Defence for Children organisation, denounced the violation of the rights of asylum seekers' children. These children are part of a deportation scheme devised by Rita Verdonk, the Minister for Integration, under which she promised parliament two years ago to evict 26,000 asylum seekers (at present 13,000), many of whom have lived for many years in the Netherlands and some of whom have children. Defence for Children believes that children have their own distinct rights, apart from their parents, and that the longer the children have been in the Netherlands, the more right they have to stay. The organisation has also complained about the children's detention.

After the horrendous fire at the refugee prison at Schiphol Airport in November last year, which cost the lives of 11 "illegal migrants", the Een Royaal Gebaar foundation, on the initiative of writer Marion Bloem, filed a complaint of negligence against Verdonk and fellow minister Piet Donner. At least 15,000 people have given online support to the complaint which states that the Schiphol fire was not an accident but the logical result of refugee policy. The two ministers are accused of causing death by negligence, causing severe bodily harm and detaining people in cruel and inhumane conditions. According to the foundation, the ministers refused to build safe detention centres because they wanted to run them as cheaply as possible.

Finally, a committee founded by relatives of the victims and survivors of the blaze has filed a complaint against the two ministers for their "criminal policy" aimed at dehumanising, criminalising and marginalising refugees. Whether the various complaints will be taken to court has not yet been decided.

Meanwhile, a new book, *More guns, less crime*, by Michiel Smit, the racist leader of NieuwRechts, argues in favour of free possession of guns by all Dutch citizens. Smit says that people should use pepper spray, baseball bats and guns to defend their homes, offices and shops from burglars and robbers. And an Amsterdam court has ruled that it is not a crime to call Smit "the biggest neo-nazi in Dutch politics". The verdict resulted from a complaint he filed against Haitske van der Linde, Leefbaar Nederland's former leader, who tried to distance herself and her party from Smit's activities by branding him a "neo-nazi" on television in 2002.

From Jeroen Bosch for *Alert!* and Antifa-Net in Utrecht

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The ultimate

After reading in the Spanish press of the terrible fate of would-be immigrants trying to enter Europe from Spain Terry Fitzpatrick set out to find out for himself what was really happening. He visited the Canary Islands and Western Sahara in search of the truth and, in the first of a two-part exclusive feature article, tells his story for Searchlight.

Suspected African illegal immigrants aboard a Spanish Civil Guard vessel after being intercepted trying to reach Fuerteventura in the Canary Islands 10 February2004 Picture: REUTERS/ Juan Medina

Twelve years ago the first boatload of sub-Saharan Africans arrived on a beach on the Canary Island of Fuerteventura. They were the advance guard of what was to become an exodus of black Africans fleeing a continent which was descending into social and economic chaos as civil wars, inter-ethnic tensions and massive government corruption drove people north. Later in that decade the situation would worsen as the neo-liberal policies of the World Trade Organisation forced the vulnerable economies of the region to open up to European and American competition, and local industries collapsed as cheap subsidised goods flooded their markets. Authoritarian governments, which looted both natural resources and foreign aid, and repressed all attempts at democratic reform, imprisoning and murdering their opponents, drove even more people into exile, and finally the Aids epidemic began to take its toll.

All the time people sat in the evenings in villages without the most basic facilities, no running water, sanitation or health care, but with a television powered by a petrol generator linked to a home-made satellite dish. Through this they could see another, much better way of life. The world portrayed by Sky, CNN the BBC and Al Jazeera is a very attractive one when your children are sick and the family hasn't eaten for a couple of days. There were also the stories coming back of those who had made it to the promised land and whose remittances were visibly changing the lives of families.

Unlike much western aid which is stolen, money wired back from Europe goes straight to the family for whom it is intended; it is not difficult to see which families have a relation working in the EU. The incentives to get out are massive. Two of the nearest points on the continent of Africa to Europe are in Spain, the seven islands of the Canaries and the Costa del Sol in southern Spain.

The island of Fuerteventura lies a little over a hundred kilometres from the Western Sahara and the beaches of the Andalucian coast half that. Over the decade that followed from that first landing hundreds of thousands were to make similar journeys and thousands were to lose their lives in a continuing tragedy of which Europe is almost entirely unaware.

I became aware of and began to follow this exodus three years ago when I subscribed to the biggest circulation daily in Spain, *El Pais*. I began to read, on an almost daily basis, of something which for the British press wasn't happening. One page of the edition of 17 January 2003 was devoted to the subject, "Sixteen immigrants drown after their boat capsizes off Fuerteventura". The article was accompanied by a photograph of a line of body bags on a dockside in the south of the island. "44 'sin papeles' (without papers) drowned in 2003 trying to land on the island ... The Civil Guard captured 10,791 immigrants last year, a 47% increase." And on 1 November 2003, "The sea gives up another 13

price for a better life

bodies from a shipwreck off Rota". The edition of 10 January 2004 gives a figure for the four years from 2000 to 2003 of 74,000 people who arrived in small boats, quoting Interior Ministry figures.

As the saga unfolded through the press and the websites of the Guardia Civil and Spanish NGOs another strand in the worldwide movement of people started to come to light. Asian people began to turn up. In December 2003 21 Indians landed in Fuerteventura; a few days before that a boat with 75 people on board was detained off the same island of whom five were from India and eight from Bangladesh.

Later on the same night another boat is detained: of the 31 on board four are from India. I will sit in a cafe in a town in the Western Sahara just before Christmas and speak to two men who will tell me of the incredible journey these people have made and how trade routes thousands of years old and the hadj to Mecca have made it possible.

Puerto Rosario, Canary Islands

I had already made a contact in the capital of Fuerteventura through the internet and what he had to tell me was very interesting and borne out by Spanish government figures. The number of boats landing on the islands was down dramatically but the number of children being brought in had rocketed. The reason for the reduction was the introduction of a new system called SIVE, the Spanish acronym for Integrated Exterior Vigilance System. It is located in the Port Authority building in front of my hotel, alongside which is moored the Guardia Civil fast patrol boat which has rescued hundreds from the ocean over the years. SIVE was able to detect the presence of small boats and people by thermal imaging enabling the Spanish to turn them back well off the coasts. What the smugglers had turned to now was trafficking in children. This new departure was entirely Moroccan; to date no sub-Saharans have been found.

Parents would pay for a child to be smuggled into Spain where, under Spanish law, the child had to be looked after, housed, clothed and educated and, at the age of majority, given Spanish papers. The family would then have a bread winner in Europe. The smugglers could also pack more people into the boats. Spain could not send the children back, unless their parents could be traced, because of a lack of facilities to look after them. The same day as we spoke three local judges of the family court ruled that the children should be returned and Spain was going to provide the funds for two purpose-built centres in Morocco. It was cheaper to do that than keep the four and half thousand who had arrived in only a very short space of time, 1,500 in the first ten months of 2005.

I hire a car and drive around the island. It is easy to see why it is home to thousands of European expatriots. The whole of the coast consists almost entirely of beaches, the population has grown from 20,000 to 90,000 in a few years with villas costing a quarter of a million pounds. It was onto these beaches that the immigrant boats landed and where the bodies of those who had drowned were washed up.

Whilst checking property prices I get talking to an English estate agent. The market, it seems, is good and the island attracts a "better class" of person than the Costa del Sol. I get around to the subject of immigrants and, quite unprompted, he talks about the problem of the bodies on the beaches. Although thousands of sub-Saharans have passed through this island over the past decade there are no black faces on the streets. I haven't seen one since I have been here, the reason it seems is that they are kept at a reception centre cum prison at the airport and when that is full are flown to mainland Spain.

There is no problem with groups of Africans in the urban centres begging, but bodies on beaches are a different matter and are most decidedly bad for business. On two occasions his company has had a sale fall through when the clients had gone for a walk on the beach only to find dead Africans. Businesses on the island have been lobbying the government for years to clamp down on the smugglers, not from any concern for the victims but because of the effect on sales.

I leave my mobile number with my contact in case there are more landings. I have already left it with bar owners, my hotel and a member of the Port police. Nothing happens, I don't have much time as the weekly flight to El Aauin leaves on Friday afternoon. I am at the airport when my mobile rings, a boat has landed in Lanzarote with 36 people on board; it seems to have come from Tarfaya, a town to the north of El Aaiun.

El Aaiun, Western Sahara

El Aaiun sits astride the main road from sub-Saharan Africa to the Mediterranean; it is the most important town for a thousand kilometres and is the headquarters of what the indigenous Saharawi people see as an occupying Moroccan army. The former Spanish colony was invaded in 1976 by Morocco and Mauritania after the Spanish pulled out. The local people then launched a guerrilla war led by the Polisario Front which adopted the tactics used by the British against the German Africa Corps in the Western Desert in the Second World War. Basing themselves in Algeria, the Polisario adapted Land Rovers and lorries with heavy machine guns and carried out hit and run attacks against the occupiers: they were so successful that Mauritania pulled out of the territory. The Moroccans then took over everything down to the Mauritanian border and constructed a wall of sand and rock several metres high stretching from the Atlantic to the Algerian border, one thousand six hundred and ninety miles, with military posts the entire length as well as mines, barbed wire and listening devices. With one hundred thousand troops in the territory Morocco has made it one of the most militarised places on the continent.

My hotel could be straight out of a Graham Greene novel. There are only two that serve alcohol and mine is home to the biggest show in town, the UN, as well as the bar providing an evening rendezvous for the wealthier of the local businessmen. There has been a ceasefire since 1991 policed by the UN and 95 per cent of the hotel's rooms are paid for by Kofi Annan. Breakfast is a display of military uniforms from more than 40 countries. In the evenings from five or so onwards the bar and lobby area become a cross between a stock exchange and a chamber of commerce. Papers and documents are laid out on tables, mobile phones ring, worry beads click, single malts are downed and deals are done.

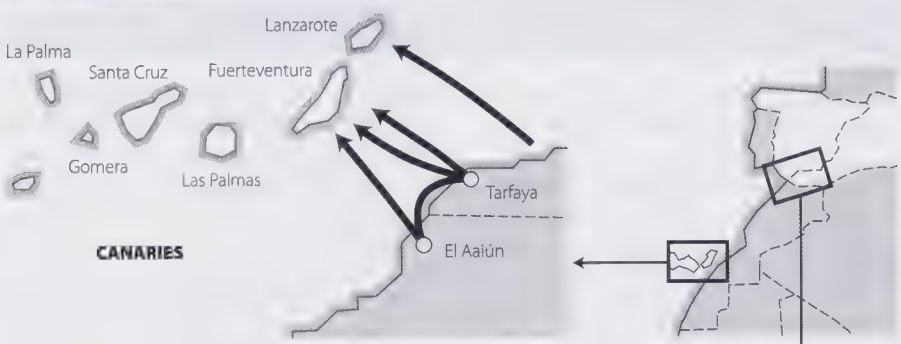
As I talk to people about why I am there, one thing becomes apparent: the trafficking of people to the Canaries is one of the worst kept secrets in town, everybody knows about it. I get talking to one of the managers and, completely unprompted, he points out the area to the north where the beaches are on my map. He is confirming what two other journalists have said. Giles Tremlett in *The Guardian* and Tomas Barbulo in *El Pais* both identified these beaches about 30 kilometres north of El Aauin as being from where the boats depart. In conversations with the businessmen I indicate that I would like to speak to some of the people involved and several people say they will make enquiries.

At breakfast the next morning I get into conversation with a senior officer in a European army, I tell him what I am doing and he also confirms the position of the beaches, but suggests caution, I am getting a bit worried in case I have bitten off more than I can chew. I head south in a hired car. I have tried to get a four-wheel drive but none is available, a fact that later on I might have cause to be grateful for.

The map shows a well defined major road running down to the border with Mauritania. In fact it is what the Americans would call a two lane blacktop, poorly maintained and crumbling at the edges. At the edge of

MAIN ROUTES OF THE BOATS

1. Canaries



2. Straits of Gibraltar

El Aaiun and further on just past the phosphate port there are police road blocks, lorries are being opened up and buses boarded, there is heavy security. A few weeks before my arrival there had been anti-Moroccan demonstrations and I am told that they are searching for Islamic militants. Most of those involved in the Madrid bombings were Moroccans and there is heavy European pressure on Morocco over this.

I have been told to look at a former fishing village called Tarooma. It is not on the map but about 100 kilometres south of the capital I see a rusting sign pointing towards the Atlantic. A hundred yards later another sign welcomes me to "Tarooma, the fisherman's village". It might have been at one time but the flight of half of the population to Algeria has turned it into a ghost town. A good half of the houses are unoccupied and all are in very poor state of repair, more importantly there is none of the usual apparatus of fishing. There is a complete absence of nets, floats or a slipway: things that even the smallest of such villages in other parts of the world have.

There is however a shop of sorts with a Range Rover parked outside. The owner is not pleased to see me. He speaks no Spanish but I tell him in English that I am a tourist while I look around. The place is also a ships' chandler's, there are several outboard motors, some under repair. There is a bench with a vice and a good selection of tools and piles of timber. For a village that doesn't seem to do any fishing, this one is very well equipped to repair boats and engines.

My plan had been to carry on down the coast to a place called Boujdour where information says that boats are being built but the rented Fiat is overheating and I don't want to break down in the desert so I head back. At the outskirts of El Aaiun the police are still stopping vehicles and people are out on the side of the road having their papers examined. It is clear that nothing moves in or out of the town without, if it is illicit, a very good chance of it being found.

One of the people I had spoken to the previous evening approaches me that evening in the bar at the hotel. He has made enquiries and has located two people who, he says, used to be smugglers. They will not come to the hotel but they are not far away in the old town. I am unsure whether I am making the right decision but I agree to be in the bar at seven o'clock the following evening. I hand over a 50 euro note and ask how much the former smugglers will want. Nothing I am told, they just want to tell you their story.

I have relied heavily throughout the research on the writings of a Spanish journalist, Tomas Barbulo, a regular contributor to *El Pais*. Two years previously he had published a detailed article where he described how he had made contact with smugglers who had taken him to where the immigrants were being held. On the map that accompanied the article he listed the beaches north of El Aaiun towards the town of Tarfaya as where the boats set off. The map shows that this is where the road swings away from the sea leaving several kilometres of desert to traverse, possible only in a four-wheel drive. It is also at Tarfaya that Morocco comes closest to the Canary Islands, a little over a hundred kilometres.

The following morning I set off and head north watching the trip metre. To get to the road I pass through a part of town which is the headquarters of the Moroccan army; several acres are covered in barracks, soldiers are to be seen marching in groups or in lorries and military police direct traffic. At the very edge where the desert begins is a police checkpoint. As on the road south vehicles are being checked; El Aaiun is a town under military rule.

The desert is the same but there are more abandoned buildings than to the south. These would have been the homes of some of the two hundred thousand Saharawis who fled the fighting two decades earlier and are now in camps in Algeria. At the 27 kilometre mark a substantial group of buildings appear on the horizon along with trees, a sure sign of water.

I pull up some 20 metres past the buildings, get out and begin to walk towards them. I have been told that the immigrants are sometimes assembled in buildings like these and I am looking for signs of occupation. I haven't gone far when a furious barking begins and a voice calls out. A man is walking, or rather half running, towards me. In a mixture of French and Spanish he tells me the place is private and I am not allowed to go into the buildings; he takes my arm and leads me towards the road. I ask him what he does and he tells me that he is the guardian. "The guardian of what?" I ask. "The source", he says and points to a tap hidden behind a low wall. At that point I become aware of the presence of two other men and see the dog, it is some kind of a mastiff cross and is on a long chain. I then see three long-wheelbase Land Rovers hidden in the trees. I walk back to the car and drive off.

It seems a little strange that it should take three men, a dog and three Land Rovers to guard a tap and later that evening I will find out more about the guardians of the source. Seventy kilometres further is Tarfaya; it has been named in both British and Spanish newspapers as one of the bases from which boats set out, and there are boats being built and repaired in side streets in full view of anyone passing by. I have a coffee next door to what is clearly a ships' chandler's among other things. Half a dozen outboard motors are in the process of being stripped down for repairs and the owners are decidedly unfriendly when I talk to them. A drive around the town reveals a large building which is the headquarters of the Royal Moroccan Gendarmerie and it is difficult to escape the conclusion that any large-scale enterprise such as the building of boats and the assembling of large numbers of people, particularly Africans, could go unnoticed.

Back at the hotel in El Aaiun a UN function is breaking up and I get talking to a civilian official at the bar. He has done thirty years with the UN and has been in this area since the ceasefire. He is very cynical about the Moroccans and says the whole system is corrupt from top to bottom; he has served for several years in the Middle East and thinks that the corruption there cannot compare to what is happening in the Western Sahara. He confirms that the UN knows about the trafficking in human beings but has no authority to stop it. The only time the UN has become involved was recently when the Moroccans rounded up a large group of Africans near the Med, put them on buses and drove them south, forcing them over the wall into Polisario-controlled territory. Eventually the survivors were found but many of the original group of about 250 had died.

I say that I am intrigued by the lack of Africans on the streets, where are they? Thousands must have passed through here over the years but, as in Tarfaya, there is no sign of them. They are, it seems, in houses and small hotels, they are also out in the desert in deserted buildings and makeshift tents. He is more concerned about whether or not to take early retirement than what is happening in Western Sahara and I get the impression that most of the full-time UN officials feel the way he does, that there is nothing they can do to resolve the situation and that the military and police authorities are happy with the impasse as they control some very lucrative rackets. ◄

■ ***Next month, in the second of the two-part series,*** **Terry Fitzpatrick** ***meets the people smugglers.***

THE NETHERLANDS

Racist 'Gabbers' still growing

By Jeroen Bosch for *Alert!* and Antifa-Net in Utrecht

A SHOCK REPORT on the growth of organised racist youth in the Netherlands has found at least 125 right-wing so-called Gabber and Lonsdale groups and over documented 200 incidents, 140 of them violent, between 2001 and August 2005. According to the report, by the Anne Frank Foundation (AFS) in cooperation with the University of Leiden, the most common forms of violence have been assaults (41 cases) and confrontations between young Dutch people and youth of migrant origin (50 cases).

The AFS researchers concluded that in these confrontations the line between victim and perpetrator is often wafer-thin or blurred and that many cases are characterised by a chain of incidents and an action-reaction cycle.

Lonsdale youth, another term for Gabbers, named after their favourite dress brand, form groups that vary immensely from each other both in size and in their racist or ultra-rightist behaviour. Contrary to popular belief, Lonsdale groups are not an exclusively rural problem but are also seen in cities.

Among the questions raised in the report are whether these groups are a racist, right wing phenomenon or just another form of youth criminality. Another is the reaction of the various players in the field: the media, police, justice department, AIVD secret service, city councillors, youth workers, schools, anti-racism projects, ultra-right organisations, migrant youth groups, the hardcore music scene and, last but not least, the Lonsdale company.

An AIVD report concluded that only 5% of Gabber youth could be defined as racist but that report used a very limited definition of racism, namely "thinking oneself superior to another race". This definition, of course, renders non-racist such remarks as "migrants have to leave the Netherlands because they're different". The statement "migrants have to leave the Netherlands because they belong to an inferior race and have to be prevented from mixing with our race" would, however, be considered racist. By rigidly defining only the second remark as racist, the AIVD displays staggering ignorance about how racist opinion is formed and expressed, let alone any idea of how young people think and talk.

The AFS reports also considers aspects of youth culture. In contrast to the punks and skinheads of the 1970s and 1980s, who went out of their way to upset their parents and society, the Gabbers of today seem to have got their racist ideas from their parents. Like the Gabbers, their parents are frequently fans of the late anti-immigrant populist Pim Fortuyn, who managed to introduce "politics" into homes where it was long gone and forgotten. In this dangerous generational mix a subculture has grown in which it is regarded socially positive to identify oneself as anti-Muslim and anti-migrant, to vent hatred towards the political caste and to opt for radical solutions to fight against the "foreign rule" of the European Union.

The formation of right-wing Gabber groups varies geographically. In one region, one might see numerous Gabbers but they are never involved in racist incidents. This may be connected with a strong presence of numerous Moluccan youth groups, a factor that perhaps dissuades the Gabbers from waging a "street war" with them. On the other hand, in a small village in the north of the country, there was a group that went by the frightening name of Sieg Heil Siddeburen but turned out to be just four young boys.

Incidents involving ultra-right Gabbers have often made the headlines, especially in the aftermath of the brutal murder of the filmmaker Theo van Gogh in November 2004. But in the second half of 2005 there was hardly a media report to be found about racist attacks by Gabbers, even though they continued.

In Harderwijk, for example, groups of Gabbers and Turks clashed when Gabbers tried to set a mosque on fire while in Roelofarendsveen an Iraqi family was terrorised for a long period by Gabbers who smashed windows at the family's home and tried to burn down the house one night when the family was out. In the end, the youngsters were arrested and convicted.

In Muiderberg, an argument between Moroccans and Gabbers escalated when one of the Gabbers received a gun from his father and shot and hospitalised three Moroccans. In Eindhoven, a group of Gabbers planned an arson attack on a mosque. When they saw it was full of people they were afraid of being seen and targeted an Islamic school instead. Only a few of the crimes in the wave of violence that followed the van Gogh murder have been solved to date but around 15% were committed by Gabbers.

Another glaring gap is the lack of convictions for internet racism. From 1999 to 2005, only 10 cases of indictable postings on internet forums such as Stormfront and Holland Hardcore were prosecuted, a figure that is no comparison with the true number and severity of the lawbreaking involved. In the real, non-virtual, world prosecutions could also be pursued more vigorously and wipe out the feeling that racist criminals have relative freedom to flout the law.

Where Gabbers commit "ordinary" crimes such as violence, arson, vandalism and damage to property, they are usually prosecuted. Despite rulings from the justice authorities, these crimes are still not treated as racist but if the law were followed properly, racism in these cases would have to be taken into account and the sentences would be higher.

The Anne Frank Foundation report includes an interesting chapter on how the relationship between ultra-right and fascist organisations on the one hand, and racist Gabber groups on the other, develops.

Potentially, the thousands of Gabber youngsters provide an immense reservoir of recruitment for racist organisations. But Gabbers are a liability, with their drug abuse, violence and general apathy towards political issues. Also, the far-right organisations demand a lot of the Gabbers. Youngsters who become members are often confronted with dull, mind-numbingly boring party publications, invitations to turgid meetings held far away and

Left: Gabbers on the evening of the killing of Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam on 2 November 2004

Below: Gabbers at a National Alliance demonstration in Leeuwarden on 4 September 2004

taking part in small demonstrations under heavy police protection and sometimes confronted with opposition from locals. None of this is an attractive prospect for angry racist young Gabbers!

The various fascist and racist outfits – Voorpost, the National Alliance (NA), the Dutch People's Union (NVU) and Nieuw Rechts – all try to integrate Gabbers into their organisations, but none have so far managed to keep many on board or to grow substantially. Only the NA is more or less popular in Gabber circles, the party's radical and non-conformist message being considered attractive. NA members are active in right wing Gabber forums on the internet and post propaganda there. The NVU has also managed to win over a small contingent of right-wing Gabbers into its ranks.

The Voorpost strong-arm squad showed another line of approach, leading a racist Gabber group in Zoetermeer and incorporating its members into its own structure. The mode of operation was that leaders of Voorpost presented themselves as part of the Gabber group and became more popular among them, resulting in Gabber participation in Voorpost activities and demonstrations. All in all, though, the number of Gabbers who have become active in political parties on the far-right spectrum is still only a few dozen.

Gabbers have not had things all their own way in the youth sub-cultural arena. Groups in the hardcore music scene, for instance, have tried to limit the damage by setting out rules and dress codes for dance parties. They have also countered its racist image by organising a huge hardcore event in Eindhoven in summer under the title "United Hardcore against Racism and Hate" and by putting out anti-racist hardcore music.

The Lonsdale clothing firm has tried to claw back ground from the racists who have turned its gear into a fascist "must-have" by starting a campaign titled "Lonsdale loves all colours", with a special t-shirt and a website. The effect was limited, so recently Lonsdale started a campaign called "Tough" to emphasise the brand's boxing history.

Other attempts to disown the racists have been more direct. Lonsdale's Belgian importer stopped distributing the firm's clothes and some Dutch clothing shops have also stopped selling Lonsdale.

It is important that those who deal with racist Gabbers adopt a united approach to prevent them from becoming hardline racial extremists, that the law does not pass over the racist element of crimes that come before the courts and that hate crimes on the internet are energetically prosecuted. So far, there are no signs, unfortunately, that this potentially dangerous youth sub-culture is diminishing, a fact that guarantees to keep anti-fascists busy for some time. ◄

Ludmilla plays lad

by Gerry Gable

Nazi belle of the ball: Lucy Roberts

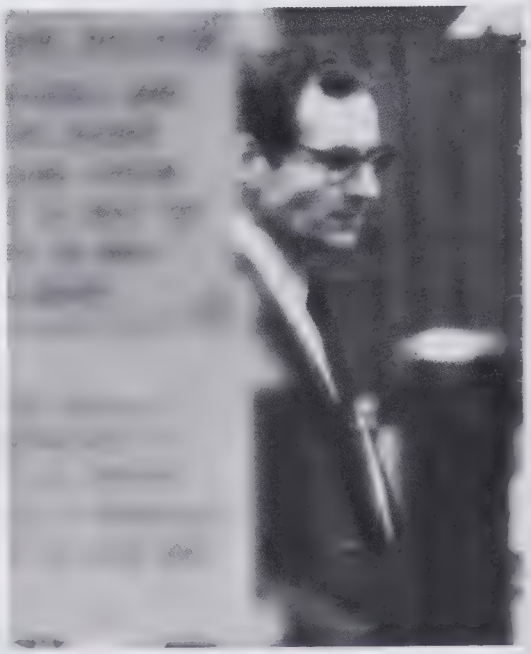
A one-time leading light on the British and international nazi scene, whose past is shrouded in mystery, is the source of some recent largesse towards at least three British far-right organisations.

Lucy Roberts was a senior member of the small but wealthy League of St George. An elite extreme nazi organisation, it was founded in the mid-1970s by former activists and financial backers of Sir Oswald Mosley's postwar organisation, Union Movement. For a period its influence on the extreme right greatly exceeded its tiny membership.

The League was very much a pro-European nazi group in contrast to most of the British nazi movement which was strictly British nationalist. This made it a natural political home for Roberts, who was presented with a silver plate by veterans of the Nazi SS Langemark Division at one of their gatherings in Belgium in the early 1980s in appreciation of her services.

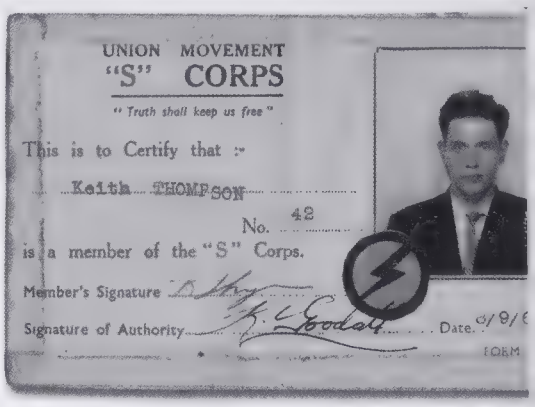
What those service were is unclear. Apparently born Ludmilla Hausner in East Prussia or Poland, she claims to have been captured by the Russians in September 1939 at the age of 13 and sent to a Soviet camp in Kazakhstan. She later escaped, she says, and ended up in a refugee camp in East Africa, by way of Uzbekistan and Persia, now Iran. But there is some uncertainty about her age and she may well be a few years older than she claims.

The name Roberts came from her marriage in 1951 to a 55-year-old retired civil servant and former army captain, Arthur Roberts, in Tanganyika, now part of Tanzania. By then she had adopted the first name Lucy, an English contraction of Ludmilla, and was working as a clerk in Dar es Salaam, the country's capital. By the time she became prominent in the League the husband was no longer on the scene.



Her home in Lanark Road, Maida Vale, hosted many social and political gatherings of the League including Hitler birthday parties. The League took its name from the wartime Legion of St George, also known as the British Free Corps. The Legion's ranks consisted of a few dozen traitors who worked with the SS and Nazi intelligence, the most infamous of whom was John Amery. A relation of a member of Churchill's wartime Cabinet and the brother of the late Conservative MP Julian Amery, John Amery was hanged for his treason soon after the war ended.

Others in the unit received lengthy prison sentences for their treachery but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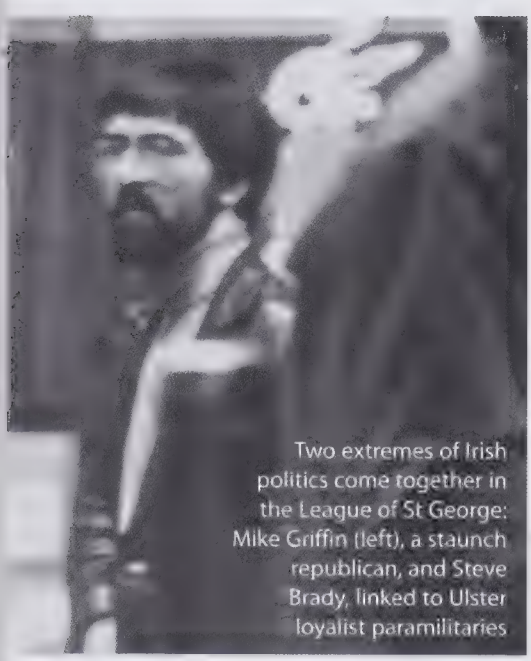
y bountiful to the far right



Two extremes of Irish politics come together in the League of St George: Mike Griffin (left), a staunch republican, and Steve Brady, linked to Ulster loyalist paramilitaries

were to be amnestied by the early 1950s. One of them was Walter Purdy, who went into partnership with Britain's nazi godfather Colin Jordan. Their printing business, Berrance Press in northwest London, produced nazi publications for Jordan's National Socialist Movement in the 1960s.

Roberts appeared on a British Security Service "watch list" of individuals suspected of being subversive or a danger to the country's security. This meant that her movements in and out of the country were monitored but this did not prevent her from travelling freely to meet nazis in Switzerland and attend nazi rallies in Belgium. The watch list shows her name as Lucy A M T Roberts and as Ludmilla Baack Roberts, with dates of birth for both names given as 3 June 1923 or 3 June 1927. Yet her marriage certificate states she was born on 3 June 1926. It is unclear at what point in her life she used the name Baack or indeed whether it was her real name.

At the same time as her nazi activities in the 1980s she held a membership card in the Labour Party and was a trade union branch membership secretary for NALGO at her place of work, the North West Thames Health Authority.

In contradiction to her story of escaping from Kazakhstan as a young teenager and spending the rest of the war in East Africa rather than serving the SS, her comrades in the League of St George saw her as an inspiration and "the real thing" – a connection to genuine Nazis. She was also considered a great beauty especially in her evening gowns in which she looked like a society belle.

Those League comrades included Keith Thompson, who now runs the League's book publishing and distribution operation under the name Steven Books. *Searchlight* recently exposed the sale of his hardline nazi and antisemitic books by major retailers including Tesco and WH Smith, both of which have since removed his material from their websites.

Another key League officer was Noel Griffin, known as Mike Griffin in his business enterprises and among his nazi friends, an Anglo-Irish insurance and pensions millionaire. Like Thompson, Griffin served in the RAF. Griffin, no relation to Nick Griffin, leader of the British National Party, was one of the main helpers of the Italian terrorist Roberto Fiore's colleagues from the Italian Armed Revolutionary Nuclei (NAR), who fled to Britain after the Bologna bombing in 1980.

Griffin also set up and ran the Michael Collins Association, formed to honour the Irish nationalist killed in 1922, until Searchlight exposed him. He is still regularly attends the annual commemoration of Michael Collins in the Irish Republic. The League was exceptional on the British far right for its backing of the Irish Republican cause, following in the Mosley tradition of support for a united Ireland.

Other wealthy backers of the League included the Rushton family and Douglas Harrison. Its less wealthy but highly politically committed members included Steven Brady, Roger Clare, John Harrison, David Kerr, Tony Creese , Bob Ramage, Della Alexander and Roger Gleaves. Its nominal president was Hubert Grestock.

Ian Millard, now a barrister in Exeter, ran his minuscule and short-lived National Reorganisation Party

Lucy Roberts confronted by Searchlight cameras at work

from Roberts's home, where he was a frequent lodger.

After a devastating series of exposures the League went into decline at the end of the 1980s but it did not die completely and Thompson managed to retain a hold over its affairs and publications.

Gone and almost forgotten by all but her closest associates and in failing health Roberts became an increasingly solitary figure and her house, worth well over a million pounds, fell into disrepair. Last year she decided to move to France, selling the house for £930,000, far short of its true value but still a tidy sum. She currently resides in a small room in the Cheval Blanc (White Horse) Hotel in Saint Pol de Léon in Brittany while Mike Griffin, who has moved to Pau in southwest France, looks for somewhere for her to buy a home and settle down. An important factor in Roberts's choice of hotel appears to have been its readiness to house the love of her life, her cats.

Ever generous, Roberts has started handing out the first of what could be long-term funding to far-right groups in Britain in the form of donations of £5,000 to, we believe, the British National Party, the National Front and her old friend Keith Thompson. ◄

POLAND

Far-right thinking permeates new government

By Rafal Pankowski for *Nigdy Wiecej* and Antifa-Net in Warsaw

THE SWING TO the extreme right in Polish politics at the end of 2005 surprised most observers. Although the extreme right-wing League of Polish Families (LPR) polled a mere 8% of the vote in the election on 25 September 2005, it has been allowed to enter into an informal parliamentary coalition with the ruling Law and Justice Party (PiS). The radical populist Self-Defence Party (Samoobrona) is also part of the coalition.

What is more disturbing, however, is that PiS has effectively adopted the Catholic fundamentalist and nationalist ideology of the LPR, and Radio Maryja, the notorious ultra-nationalistic and antisemitic radio station, has become virtually the main medium for the promotion of government policy.

Prime minister Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz and his top Cabinet ministers now regularly travel to Radio Maryja's headquarters in Torun, to take part in live broadcasts lasting many hours. The government has even promised to build a new motorway from Warsaw to Torun for the convenience of the radio station's bosses and the state lottery has announced it will help finance Radio Maryja's private university.

This kind of intimacy between the country's leaders and the extremists is without recent precedent but, against this background, certain other aspects of the new political landscape may not be that surprising.

For example, Lech Kaczynski, the leader of the PiS who was recently elected president of Poland, claims he is not a nationalist but, in an interview with the weekly *Polityka*, stated: "I believe in the need for cooperation with people of national-Catholic [i.e. nationalist] views in one political party". While some people in the president's circle are not hardliners, many are most definitely nationalist radicals.

One of the latter is the newly appointed Speaker of Parliament, Marek Jurek. Known for years for his Catholic fundamentalist views, Jurek achieved international notoriety when he made a much-publicised trip to London to meet and support his hero, the Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, while Pinochet was under arrest.

Jurek's travelling companion was none other than Michal Kaminski, whose claim to fame includes helping to mobilise the population of Jedwabne in northeast Poland against a commemoration of a wartime pogrom in 2001.

Kaminski, now a PiS MEP, is on record as declaring his support for the infamous slogan "Poland for the Polish", which invokes terrible memories of the antisemitic violence of the 1920s and 1930s. In this context, Kaminski's membership of the fascist National Rebirth of Poland party

The BNP unmasked

This recently filmed DVD reveals the true nature of the BNP – in their own words. It shows them behind closed doors when they think the public are not watching. It proves they are still Nazis.

In this DVD you see Scott McLean, the party's deputy chairman, giving a Nazi salute at a BNP "winter camp" where party members sing racist and pro-Nazi songs, glorify the Holocaust and call for blacks to be killed.

For more information and to order a copy please visit www.stopthebnp.com, or you can order copies by post from Searchlight at £4.00 each including p&p.

Human rights campaingers and anti-fascists protest at homopoobia Pictures: "Never Again" Associat

(NOP, now part of terrorist Roberto Fiore's European National Front) in the early 1990s comes as little surprise. Kaminski was among Kaczynski's main campaign advisers and his political significance looks set to grow further.

Another PiS MEP is Marcin Libicki, until not long ago a leading member of the fascist National Right (PN) group, the official sister organisation of Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National in France. Libicki recently tried to force the Polish public prosecutor to take legal action against the website of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Los Angeles for alleged "anti-Polish" content in its presentation of Second World War history.

Interestingly, Libicki once sat on the board of *Prawica Narodowa* (National Right), the magazine that published the Holocaust-denying ravings of the late Belgian collaborator and SS general Leon Degrelle.

The new government's first weeks in office have been characterised by hardline law and order rhetoric, anti-Russian bombast and pledges to introduce compulsory "patriotic education" for the nation's youth. The president's twin brother, Jaroslaw, who is widely believed to be the PiS's real leader, said in a Radio Maryja broadcast in January 2006 that he was increasingly convinced that "a form of censorship is necessary" to defend "moral values".

Jaroslaw Kaczynski was a vocal critic of Radio Maryja and of the nationalist-fundamentalist tendency in the 1990s. His strategic U-turn and the adoption of similar ideology by the main force on the Polish right is not a promising sign for democracy in Poland.

The government's new far-right orientation found its immediate expression in the prohibition and subsequent violent dispersal of an anti-discrimination march in Poznan on 19 November 2005. Seventy-five people were held for taking part in an "unlawful demonstration" and right-wing politicians and the Catholic Church accused the march organisers of promoting the "unacceptable" principle of gay rights.

The following week a wave of protests and solidarity demonstrations swept through numerous Polish cities, with a broad coalition of anti-fascists, human rights supporters, intellectuals, artists and various political groups voicing their opposition to the increasingly authoritarian drift of state policy. In some cities, such as Elblag, the demonstrators were violently confronted by fascists, skinheads and football hooligans, some of them belonging to the NOP and the LPR's youth wing, All-Polish Youth (MW).

Roman Giertych, the leader of the LPR and the MW, now chairs the parliamentary committee on special services, further evidence that state structures are increasingly being held hostage to the extremists.

In sharp contrast to the situation in Austria in 2000, when the European Union loudly protested at right-wing extremist Jörg Haider's influence on the government, the international community has generally expressed little opposition to the new regime in Poland. ◄

RUSSIA

Far right tries to exploit French riots

By Mara Vladimirova for Antifa-Net in Moscow

THE SPECTACLE OF blazing vehicles and rioting in France in November has had unusually wide resonance in Russia, expressed not least by hysterical media coverage.

The Russian press generally presents world news simply, often without comment. However the media made an exception for the events in France and used them as a peg for a public debate about migrants in Russia. The result read like a bad translation from French magazines, in which the social context of the civil unrest and the tragedy of the two boys who died in the Paris suburbs while pursued by the police all but disappeared to be replaced by the venting of ethnic and racist spleen.

Although there were some exceptions in the shape of a handful of experts on France who tried to explain what happened there and why, underlining that those involved were not illegal immigrants but French citizens, the so-called "debate" followed two main lines, both designed to appeal to the nationalist element in Russian politics and life.

First, conservatives mused with great pleasure on the deep crisis of Western liberal values and even – ridiculously – compared the French riots with the student upsurge there in 1968. The purpose of this exercise in *Schadenfreude* was, of course, to spell out yet again to liberals, democrats and human rights campaigners that liberal ideas have little place in Russia.

Russian politicians such as Lubov Slizka, president of Vladimir Putin's United Russia party and a deputy speaker of the Russian parliament, the Duma, loudly suggested that nobody could expect anything else from an "old and lazy Europe which is always too late and which should learn from Russia" how to solve such social issues.

Other more nationalist politicians dragged the "debate" in a visibly anti-immigration direction, frightening Russians with the notion that Moscow, St Petersburg and other cities that act as magnets for migrant workers could soon witness the same scenario as France. Curiously, at the same time as this debate was getting under way, "information" emerged that a group of young hooligans had started to burn cars in St Petersburg.

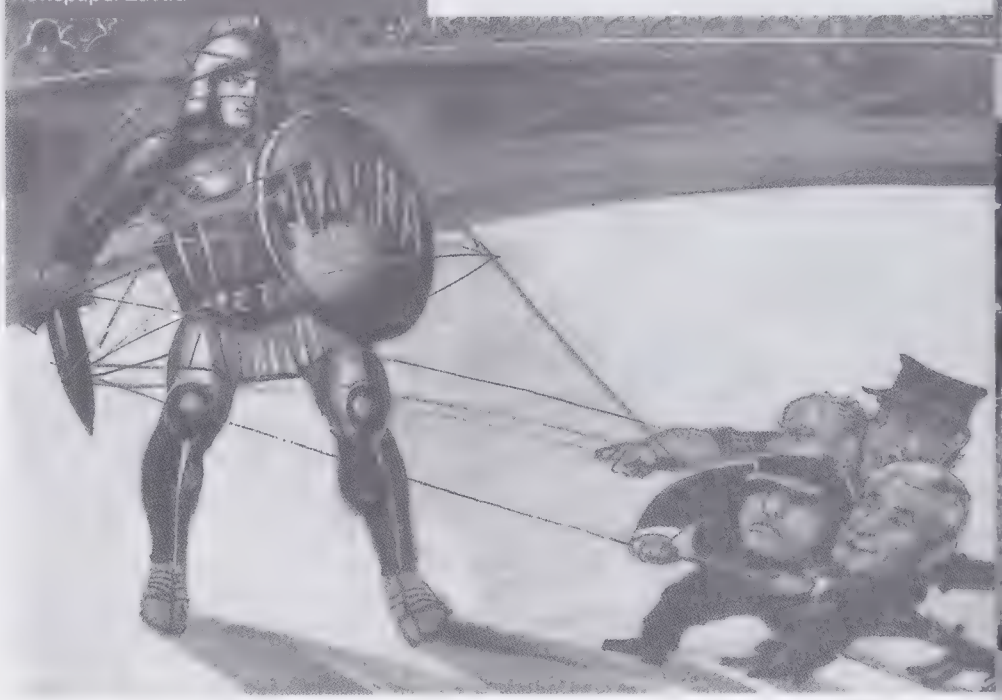
Much of the commentary read like the opinion of rich white visitors to Paris and showed woeful ignorance of the political and social structure of modern France, to the extent that Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the fascist Front National (FN), was repeatedly described as the sage who predicted the disturbances.

Even interviews with those who are aware of the realities of France produced some strange comments by people hitherto not regarded as nationalists or racists. For example, the liberal and popular writer Victor Erofeev, whose books have been translated into almost all European languages and who is well acquainted with France, shamelessly told listeners to Russia's most liberal and independent radio station, Echo of Moscow, that "Arabs and Africans will never be intellectually the same as white French people despite equal education" and that "they have low moral principles and are very lazy".

Natalia Gevorkyan and Sergei Parchomenko, two well known liberal journalists who appeared on the same programme with Erofeev, followed the same racist line but in more polite form, clearly fearful that their "lovely France" – by which they meant *white* France – was going up in flames. The revelation of these inner thoughts by usually politically correct people showed that, despite all their talk about equality, racism runs very deep in Russia.

Another Echo of Moscow contributor "explaining" the motives of the rioters in France said that emigrants from Russia "of course" could not have participated in such upheavals because they have a "higher level of adaptation", and that Russians in France should change their

Above: Sergei Baburin, leader of the nationalist party Narodnaya Volya
Below: Caricature about the ban on Rodina's participation in elections published in the nationalist newspaper *Zavtra*



names to French ones so as to abandon their migrant status more quickly.

As even supposedly politically educated people understood the problems in France solely in intercultural and ethnic terms, the reaction of self-declared nationalists was no surprise, especially as the riots erupted during the campaign for the Moscow city council elections on 4 December.

The nationalists' first move was their big march on 4 November, the holiday that has replaced the traditional commemoration of the 1917 October Revolution on 7 November. The demonstration, permitted by the Moscow city administration, took place with virulently anti-immigration slogans and banners.

The same nationalist anti-immigrant rhetoric was echoed widely in the programmes of several of the parties contesting the Moscow poll. Of the nine parties running, four adopted the same sort of line as the FN in France: Rodina (Motherland), Gennady Zuganov's Communist Party (KPRF), Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) and Sergei Baburin's Narodnaja Volya (People's Will).

Dimitri Rogozin, the leader of Rodina and a deputy speaker of the State Duma, commenting on the events in France, agreed with the position of the French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy and suggested that France should renege on European Union agreements on migrant issues, deport all the rioters and force all legal immigrants to work, irrespective of the job.

Rogozin has developed a similar plan for Russia. He claims that "Muscovites lose their jobs because of illegal migrants, illegal migrants are behind 65 % of crime in the Russian capital and their ethnic mafias have increased the corruption of city bureaucracy". His solution is to close Russia's borders and increase the cost of work permits.

Rodina's planned television election broadcast generated further scandal. It depicted several people, obviously from the Caucasus, as the "real owners of Moscow" and echoed Sarkozy's maladroit words about "cleaning up the city". After that broadcast was banned, Rodina put together a new broadcast with the same content but with the Eiffel Tower in the background instead of Moscow. This prompted protests from the French Embassy in Moscow.

In the end, Rodina was removed from the election list, accused – bizarrely by the loony racist LDPR – of "increasing xenophobia". The truth is that the independent activities of Rodina, a creation of Putin's Kremlin, were unwelcome and it was decided from above to put a stop to Rodina's election campaign.

The way-out right-wing LDPR used the same slogans as Rodina but in even more crude form: "Close Moscow to the Caucasians", "Strengthen the police" and "For a Moscow with Russian faces!" Alexei Mitrofanov, an LDPR MP, described the events in France as the result of a bitter power struggle between Sarkozy and Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin. And, just to add his usual dash of buffoonery, Zhirinovski promised to send groups of activists from his party to France to "quell the riots by force".

Meanwhile, Sergei Baburin, a friend of Le Pen, added his own thoughts on ethnic conflict and the crisis of multicultural civilisation by conflating migrant problems and Islamism. He went on to claim that the riots in France were not spontaneous but were prepared and directed from Washington, and that Russia will, of course, be next! The KPRF was little different, parroting similar slogans and touting the argument that cheap migrant workers are living at the expense of their Muscovite counterparts.

All this does have one similarity with the atmosphere in France, in that it reflects a very real rise of xenophobic sentiment and its manipulation both by local authorities and by the federal state. The state, in its desperate search for a new identity to replace the old Soviet one, has chosen to adopt Orthodox Russian rhetoric of a type that exalts nationalism and Russian "specificity".

In addition, because of the inequalities rampant in Russia's current development, social anger tends to focus both on the poorest foreigners, who are accused of stealing Russian jobs, and on the richest, for allegedly buying up Russia.

Demagogic political parties such as the KPRF and the LDPR surf on these prejudices at election times. Rodina also tries to use this kind of propaganda to present itself as an alternative to Putin who, already sensing the danger to his position, moved to prevent Rodina from standing in the Moscow election.

However the cat is well and truly out of the bag now and the extreme right-wing no longer needs to hide, encouraged by the laxity of local and federal authorities.

Some writers are claiming that as elections in Russia seem to be won just by waving a warning flag – under Yeltsin, it was "communism" and under Putin it has been the fear of "terrorism" – the next election could be played out around the fears of the foreigners and of fascism. This grim prospect has already started to materialise. ◄

HOOLIGANS

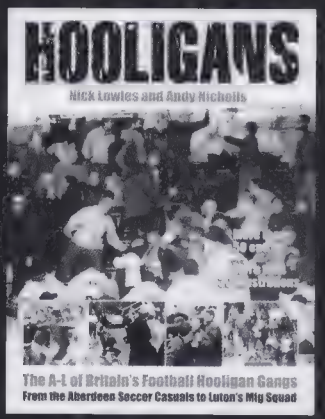
A - L of Britain's Football Hooligan Gangs

For almost 40 years football hooliganism has blighted the national game. Organised gangs of marauding young men from almost every town and city in the country have used football as an arena for violence. They have rioted, maimed and even killed.

Combining hard facts with occasional touches of black humour, *Hooligans* is the definitive account of British football hooliganism. From the gangs to the leaders, from policing to those whose lives were ruined by soccer violence, this book has it all.

Hooligans: A-L is available to Searchlight readers at £15 (inc p&p)

Hooligans Volume 2 will be published soon



Hooligans, volumes 1 & 2

- Chart the influence fascist groups have had on hooligan gangs
- Describe how multiracial gangs fought back against racist gangs
- Look at how the Miners' Strike brought class politics into the football arena.

This and a whole lot more is contained in Hooligans

SEARCHLIGHT ON THE STATES

A year in review

By Leonard Zeskind for IREHR and Antifa Net

Erich Gliebe, took over from Pierce as chairman of the National Alliance

A NUMBER OF deficits plagued the white nationalist movement during 2005. They lack a third political party and cannot run for elected office on their own label. No large underground of Aryan warriors robbed banks to finance their activities. Old-style Ku Klux Klan organisations have been pushed to the side by young racists more interested in listening to white power music than standing in a cow pasture and burning a wooden cross. And without a strong central weekly newspaper or monthly magazine to promote their cause, almost everyone has turned to cyberspace as their primary communication link with each other. The internet seems a perfect vehicle for this crowd. They can verbally abuse their enemies from 3,000 miles away, without fear of being arrested for aggravated assault. Rumour-mongering can pass for news. One person selling a carton of music CDs can declare himself king of the white power scene. And in cyberspace, both fact and historical fiction travel equally at the speed of light.

These same laws of physics have kept the doors of the Institute for Historical Review open in Southern California as the principal address and publishing house for Holocaust denial material. Protected by constitutional guarantees for free speech, the IHR has also served as a meeting place for coat-and-tie antisemites from North America and Europe. Now directed by Mark Weber, the institute publishes less and complains more about what it calls "Jewish power". Its biggest events in 2005 were a protest rally at the Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles and half a dozen picket lines at Canadian consulate offices in support of Ernst Zündel, the Holocaust denier in custody in Germany after his extradition from Canada a year ago.

Holocaust denial has largely saturated its market in the United States. An appearance by David Irving, the British historical revisionist writer, in Atlanta last March drew only 40 people to an event organised by the far-right attorney Sam Dickson, while a similar event 15 years ago might have drawn 200. A Costa Mesa meeting sponsored by the IHR that April drew just 55. Nevertheless, Weber brags that the IHR website is constantly busy, sometimes receiving 80,000 hits a day. If the market for denying Hitler's worst crimes is sagging in the USA, perhaps it is growing in Eastern Europe and Asia Minor – where the Iranian president seems to agree with Weber. Otherwise the news from the IHR is no news at all.

In the white power music business, by contrast, change is constant. Panzerfaust Records, the Hammerskin-related outfit in Minnesota, collapsed after one of its principals, Anthony Pierpont, was arrested on drug charges last February. The Southern Poverty Law Center used the occasion to publish a copy of Pierpont's birth certificate, which revealed that his mother was of Mexican origin. As a result, Panzerfaust, which had once projected sales in 2005 at $750,000 (£430,000), closed its cyber-doors. Its place seems to have been taken by a Georgia-based group calling itself Free Your Mind Productions (FYMP). Without any paid full-time staff, however, FYMP cannot match the long-term staying power of the big dog in that small universe, Resistance Records. Since Resistance Records came under the wing of the National Alliance, its fortunes have risen and fallen along with the leadership at the headquarters in West Virginia. But with its own warehouse and a stockpile of merchandise Resistance is not going away – even as the remains of William Pierce's organisation fall mightily.

The split in the National Alliance and the formation of an organisation known as National Vanguard was the biggest piece of news in 2005, as documented by Devin Burghart last April in *Searchlight*. At the time of Pierce's unexpected death in 2002, the National Alliance had achieved a level of internal cohesion and size unmatched by any other organisation of its type. It had units or proto-units in 43 cities in the United States and five in Canada, according to a report by the Center for New Community at the time. The estate in West Virginia consisted of more than 350 acres under Alliance control, with 21 national staff members keeping the gears moving forward. A corporate-style board of directors installed Erich Gliebe as chairman. Unlike Pierce, however, Gliebe was not a rocket scientist. A former boxer who had been the Alliance's top recruiter, his chief qualification seemed to be his flawless German (his father had fought in Hitler's army). Gliebe's new regime leaned heavily on the talents of other men, particularly the loyalty of Kevin Strom, who had hosted the Alliance's radio programme and helped produce its written publications. Deputy membership director Billy Roper Jr, by contrast, showed no loyalty at all. He broke ranks, created his own dismal swamp that he called "White Revolution" and quietly sank into the void.

In the meantime, Gliebe and his own second-in-command, Shaun Walker, proved remarkably inept at running things. They seemed to be given a bit too much to the pleasures of the flesh. They also managed to expel most of the competent unit leaders, churn the staff at headquarters and waste much of the cash resources the organisation held, while being unable to produce even the most basic publication: a membership handbook. Finally, last March, Gliebe stepped down from the top spot and installed Walker in his place.

Nevertheless, Strom pulled most of the competent National Alliance unit leaders and members together into a competing organisation called National Vanguard. The two names are confusing, particularly since National Vanguard was (and still is) the name of the magazine produced by the Alliance. But no mistake should be made. Although Walker-Gliebe's Alliance controls the remains of Pierce's estate, Strom's Vanguard organisation is stronger as 2006 begins. And the best evidence is in the anti-immigration movement.

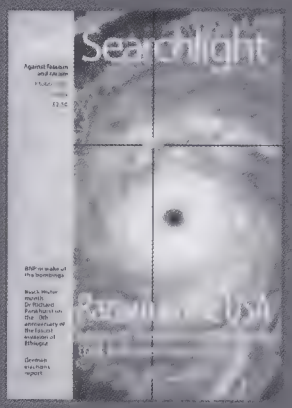
Driven by the overwhelming passage of an anti-immigrant ballot measure in Arizona in November 2004, and the successful exploitation of the media covering a Minuteman "border watch" the following spring, a nativist movement has exploded across the country. National Vanguard cadres are well integrated into its structure, even leading it in some cases. They have participated in Minutemen events, picketed on street corners and pioneered protests at the sites of Home Depot stores, a national chain specialising in lumber, hardware and other home repair products. According to a National Vanguard leaflet, "Home Depot funds 'day labor centers' for illegal aliens who compete unfairly against White [sic] American workers ..." The anti-day labour campaign has been picked up by other more mainstream and Republican anti-immigrant groups, who now mimic the antics of hard-core national socialists.

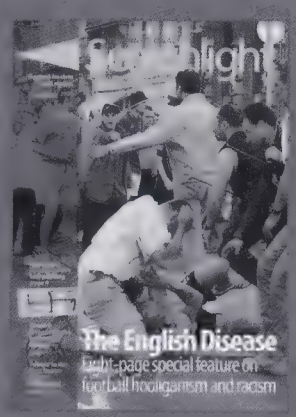
Who needs to burn crosses in a cow pasture when you cam bring your troops out on the streets of major cities? Why create a marginal third party apparatus when Republican congressmen sign up for the same nonsense? These mistakes of old have not yet been repeated by a smarter, more sinister movement today.

Twenty years ago, almost two dozen members of The Order either pleaded guilty or were convicted of criminal racketeering after an 18-month spree of robbery and murder. Sentenced to long prison terms, some as much as 99 years, they went to jail certain in their convictions. Today they are all but forgotten. "There is no mail & no assistance at all," Bruce Carroll Pierce wrote from jail. "Frankly, it hurts to see mongrel drug dealers, pimps & the ungodly receive more attention." Pierce and his bloodied comrades are ghosts now, vapours who exist only in the past. ◄

Searchlight

Every month *Searchlight* magazine exposes the far right in Britain and abroad. *Searchlight* is the main source of information for anyone who wants to know about fascism and organised racism in Britain.





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Obituary: Klaus Harbart 1955 – 2005

Graeme Atkinson, on behalf of Searchlight and Antifa-Net

DEATH HAS ROBBED the German and international anti-fascist movement of one of its most important, wisest and most popular figures, Klaus Harbart, who died, on 29 December 2005, after a battle against an aggressive cancer that he faced with characteristic courage and dignity.

Klaus was loved and respected by all who came into contact with him and it was a privilege for *Searchlight* magazine to have worked so closely with him and to have benefited from his steadfast support and loyalty since first meeting him in 1989.

Especially valued were his unrelenting efforts – with other German researchers, magazine projects and *Searchlight* – to develop a nationwide coordination of research and action through the *Hannover Kreis* where anti-fascists from the whole of Germany met regularly in Hanover to compare notes and analyse developments on the far-right.

As a founder and inspiration of the bi-monthly anti-fascist magazine *Der Rechte Rand* (DRR), he was a formidable researcher and journalist, always meticulous in his handling of the information that he strove so hard to gather.

Klaus's work with other anti-fascists was conducted on a rigorously non-sectarian basis of sharing information and cooperation and was always as transparent as possible. He withheld information only when there were genuine security reasons for doing so and never treated his knowledge as an extension of his ego or as a bargaining chip in the often conflict-ravaged broader German anti-fascist scene. Defeating the enemy was what mattered.

Klaus believed that if a job was worth doing, it should be done well and in a way that he could feel pride. He hated to disappoint people and made every effort not to do so. It is rare that a person sticks to promises the way he did.

Pivotal aspects of the life, personality and work of Klaus Harbart were his modesty and his grasp of the need always to work to unite people rather than divide them. He could almost win people over with his smile.

This motivation to unite people, which stemmed directly from the profound communist and humanitarian convictions he had held since he was an early teenage opponent of the Vietnam War and the Chilean fascist dictatorship, fuelled his work, from 1995 until the end of 2004, in rescuing the then declining and oldest German anti-fascist organisation, the Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes/Bund der Antifaschistinnen und Antifaschisten (VVN/BdA), and reviving it as an effective campaigning movement.

His full-time work for the VVN/BdA, which he had first joined in 1986, involved the sacrifice of living in Berlin – away from his Hanover home – five days a week and was a *tour de force* because it so richly justified the determination he always showed to set aside petty disagreements and focus on the bigger picture.

The crowning achievement of his period as national organiser was the unification, in October 2002 of the VVN/BdA in the west of Germany with its counterparts in eastern Germany, ending long years of division. Klaus ensured that *Searchlight* was proudly represented at the historic unity congress in Berlin.

Klaus was a beacon of honesty, political principle and reliability; a shining example to us all. Comradeship was central to his outlook and his work. When Leonard Zeskind and Jon Mozzocchi came from the USA for speaking tours, Klaus and his family were delighted to make them at home.

As part of what is still a very small group of real internationalists in the anti-fascist movement in Europe, and in Germany in particular, Klaus helped to put German anti-fascism on the international map. Thanks to him and the VVN, a *Searchlight* journalist was able to make two lengthy speaking tours with meetings across the whole of the country. His work on DRR was a direct inspiration to the decision of our Dutch colleagues to produce *Alert!*

One of his final political acts, shortly before he learned that he had been stricken with terminal illness, was to seek to enable DRR formally to become part of Antifa-Net. It is important, in honour of Klaus's memory, that we complete that process.

Klaus never sought any praise although he deserved so much. Like with the tragic death of our Swedish correspondent Stieg Larsson just over a year ago, we have collectively suffered a grievous loss in his untimely passing.

Klaus's death leaves us all poorer but his endeavours for the cause of anti-fascism and for a world free of inequality, oppression and poverty will enrich our own forever. There are not many like him and we will never forget him.

His wife, his two children and his family have our fullest sympathy and our deepest condolences at this very sad time. ◄

STOP THE BNP

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Solidarity for Tolerance and Respect

Wales

Wales Friends of Searchlight

To get your group's details included on this list in future editions of the magazine please contact Searchlight

ITALY Olympic shame

By Alfio Bernabei

FINES AND REPRIMANDS have done nothing to stop Paolo Di Canio, the Lazio footballer, from giving the fascist salute to his fans in Italian stadiums, watched by millions of television viewers.

The failure of the Italian Football Association to put an end to what has become almost a weekly televised appointment with nazi-fascist propaganda means that only pressure from FIFA, the International Football Association, may succeed in forcing the Italians to face up to their responsibility in curbing a phenomenon that encourages racism and is causing concern in the Italian Jewish community.

"I can't help doing it," said Di Canio after giving the raised arm salute during the Lazio-Livorno game last December. "I will continue to salute in this way, no matter what. The Lazio fans carry with them values, civilisation, they never hide from anybody. When one carries true values, one is always right."

In this instance he was referring to the five hundred Lazio fans who had travelled to Livorno for the away game carrying banners with Celtic crosses. They had made their way into the stadium shouting "livornesi ebrei!" (Livorno Jews) and chanting the Mussolini salute: Duce! Duce! Duce! It was a repeat of the scenes witnessed at the beginning of the year when Di Canio made the fascist salute in a stadium at the end of a city derby with Roma and was fined €10,000 (£6,700).

Threatened with a second fine after the fascist salute in Livorno, he told a radio station: "Should I be fined again, if we are really in the hands of the Jewish community, then this is really the end". Amos Luzzato, a representative of the Italian Jewish community was shocked: "It's getting worse and worse", he commented, "Di Canio seems to want to indicate that the Jewish community can exercise a degree of hidden power which nobody can escape". Vittorio Pavoncello, President of the Federation of Italian Maccabi, said: "Di Canio made the fascist salute last week as well, prior to the Lazio-Livorno game. He is creating a myth for the young. It is a bad example. It is shameful that he has been chosen to carry the flame for the Winter Olympic Games 2006 in Turin."

Di Canio did receive a second fine of €10,000 from the disciplinary committee of the Italian Football Association and was banned for one game. But that did not seem to matter to him. "I am a fascist, not a racist", he said. "I make the fascist salute because it is a form of greeting between *camerati*" (*camerati* was the word used by fascist party members to describe themselves). He added that he had deliberately chosen Bologna, a town famous for its left-wing politics, to have a tattoo made on his arm with the word "Mussolini".

Celebrated as a hero by nazi fascists all over Italy, Di Canio knows that football stadiums are the perfect ground for spreading the racist message. He always makes sure that he salutes close to television cameras. His admirers have noted his media savvy strategy. In a message of congratulation that appears on the Forza Nuova website, Roberto Fiore, the former terrorist now leading the fascist movement alongside Alessandra Mussolini, the Duce's granddaughter, writes: "I wish to express my solidarity and admiration for Paolo Di Canio who in spite of intimidation and fines has shown the courage to make the fascist salute in full view of the television cameras, in the same way as, far away from the cameras, millions of Italians do and will continue to do for many decades ahead".

On hearing of the fine and the disqualification for one game, hundreds of Lazio fans, the so-called *ultrà*, staged a demonstration outside the office in Rome of the Italian Football Association to show support for their hero. They were carrying chains to point out that no one has the right to deprive Di Canio of his freedom of expression. One of those present told a journalist: "Those over there must stop breaking our balls with such trifles as the fascist salute, those over there, I mean the ghetto, the Jews. If they accept the clenched fist from Lucarelli [a player for Livorno] they must also accept the fascist salute from Di Canio".

Strong support for Di Canio was expressed by Ignazio La Russa, the president of the MPs of Alleanza Nazionale, the neofascist party in the government coalition headed by Gianfranco Fini, Italy's Foreign Minister. "A fascist salute, so what?" commented La Russa. "It is time to put an end to such exaggerations. Anyone should be free to salute in the way one chooses. It is not a violent gesture, there is nothing dramatic about it."

Azione Giovani, the youth wing of Alleanza Nazionale, launched a petition to collect money to pay Di Canio's fine. "We know that Di Canio has the means to pay the fine by himself," said a representative of Azione Giovani, "but we wish to demonstrate our disgust at the decision to punish him".

Support for Di Canio also came from Daniela Fini, the Foreign Minister's wife, who was herself an expert at giving the fascist salute when she was an active right-wing militant. "Why make such a fuss," she said, "Di Canio is a mature person; he has his way of doing things. He should not be punished." When she was reminded that the fascist salute is forbidden by law she quipped "Really?"

Silvio Berlusconi, the Prime Minister, expressed similar sentiments in line with previous statements: "The Di Canio story is of no importance whatsoever. He is a well-behaved boy, not a fascist. He makes the salute for his fans, not because he is bad. He is a good boy, perhaps a bit too much of an exhibitionist."

Already on record for praising the "benign" aspect of fascism and for describing the fascist prisons as holiday resorts, Berlusconi went on: "Fascism in Italy was never a criminal doctrine. There were the horrible racial laws, but only because we wanted to win the war alongside Hitler."

Unfazed by fines so small as to be almost insignificant, Di Canio must feel that he can safely continue to perform the nazi fascist salute for the cameras, with the blessing of the Prime Minister. ◄

From the archives...

30

February 1976

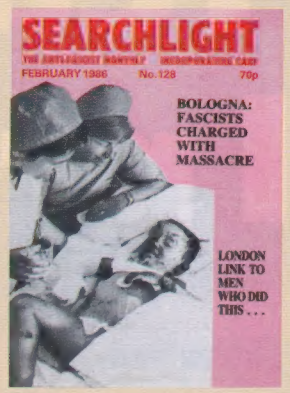
Fascism still survives

Franco is dead and buried but fascism still survives – in Spain and with infection spots in many countries. Forty years have passed since the Spanish War but there are still lessons to be learned for us today.

Before the Spanish people's resistance fascism seemed invincible, inevitable. It would come to Britain as it had to Italy, Germany and Austria. Mosley's thugs would terrorise London as Hitler's Brownshirts did Berlin. But the three-year long struggle showed that fascism could be checked and beaten when people stand up and fight.

Franco alone would have been beaten in a few days by the Republican people but he got immediate help from the other fascist bosses – Hitler and Mussolini. Their planes, guns and soldiers turned the scales against the Republic – Franco triumphed because of the Fascist International.

The British and French Governments of the day conned many of their people into support for non-intervention: "It's a Civil War, of no concern to us". But five months after the defeat of the Republic Hitler launched world war. Londoners learned the truth of La Pasionaria's slogan "Bombs on Barcelona today will mean bombs on London tomorrow!"



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February 1986

National Front and loyalists fall out

Has the National Front broken its links with the Ulster Defence Association? That is the question on the lips of many observers of the far right as we enter a period of further confrontation between Whitehall and the Loyalist leadership in Northern Ireland.

Searchlight knows that over the last few months Ulster MPs at Westminster have been trying to get "dirt" on the NF and its Ulster activities so that they could convince the UDA leadership that an on-going connection with the NF could harm all of them. "Thatcher will do anything to dirty us, if it comes to a show down", it has been said.

Over the last two years, the NF's growing links with UDA headquarters have been reflected in the amount of material being produced in Front circles in support of the UDA and loyalist prisoners.

Amongst leading Front activists who have visited the UDA are John Field, Steve Brady, who was himself an Ulster Volunteer Force officer in his youth, and Joe Pearce. And a steady supply of minders for the Front's headquarters in London has arrived from Northern Ireland.

10

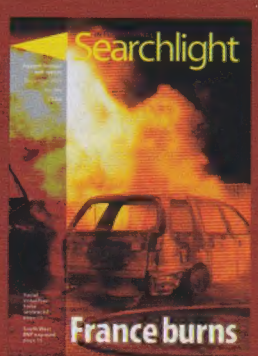
February 1996

Editorial

Proposals by the government to withdraw benefits from asylum seekers have been declared unlawful by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. But still Michael Howard and Peter Lilley are intent on ensuring that Britain introduces legislation that has no respect for human dignity and welfare. In this issue *Searchlight* has devoted four pages to looking at the damaging legislation that this government is bringing in to combat the imaginary "problem" of refugees and asylum seekers. Searchlight believes it is vital that anti-fascists are at the centre of the struggle against these pernicious measures.

Bills to restrict immigration have been brought in by both Conservative and Labour governments. But the frequency with which ever more pernicious controls have been introduced is now a hallmark of the present government. It is a cheap swipe at the most vulnerable and has huge implications for the kind of society in which we live.

Even without the introduction of the latest proposals the present practice of immigration control in this country has exposed the party of "moral and family values" for what it truly is.



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Always read the small print

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timate price for a better life

decade that followed from that first landing hundreds of thousands were to make similar journeys and thousands were to lose their lives in a continuing tragedy of which Europe is almost entirely unaware.

I became aware of and began to follow this exodus three years ago when I subscribed to the biggest circulation

bodies from a shipwreck off Rota". The edition of 10 January 2004 gives a figure for the four years from 2000 to 2003 of 74,000 people who arrived in small boats, quoting Interior Ministry figures.

As the saga unfolded through the press and the websites of the Guardia Civil and Spanish NGOs another

routes thousands of years old and the hadj to Mecca have made it possible.

Puerto Rosario, Canary Islands

I had already made a contact in the capital of Fuerteventura through the internet and what he had to tell me was very interesting and borne out by Spanish government figures.

What the smugglers had turned to now was trafficking in children. This new departure was entirely Moroccan; to date no sub-Saharans have been found.

Parents would pay for a child to be smuggled into Spain where, under Spanish law, the child had to be looked after, housed, clothed and educated and, at the age of majority, given Spanish